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OPEN WORLD IN THIS
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ISSUE NO 228
THE JRPG'S SAVIOUR?

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REVIEWED**

The definitive
verdict on Raiden's
electric spin-off

LIGHTNING RETURNS FINAL FANTASY XIII

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TROPHY
GUIDE**

Platinum PS3's
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Where will Sony's
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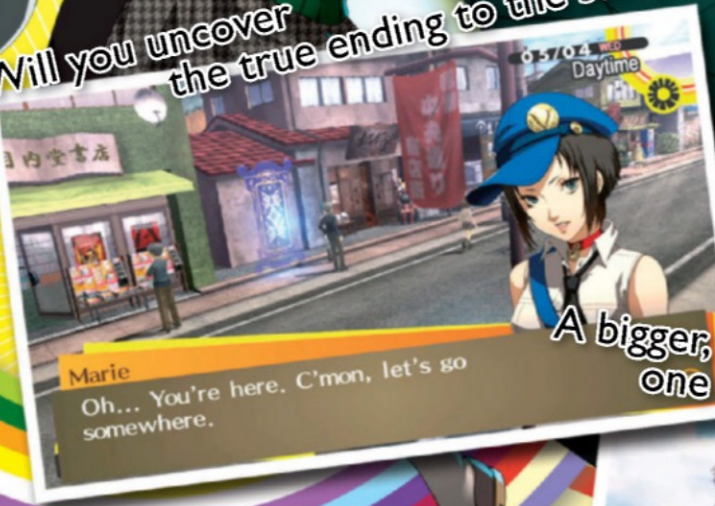
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ISSUE 228

Coming February on
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P4G PERSONA 4 GOLDEN

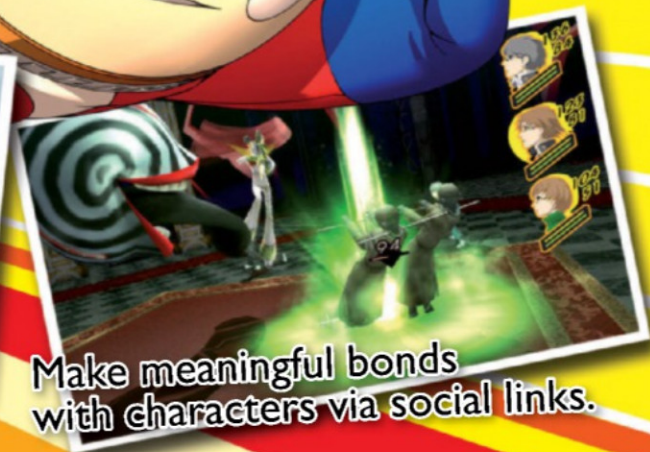
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演劇端末 PlayStation 3 PSN PSVita PSP Welcome **PLAY**

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Square Enix takes its RPG to the ends of the earth

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RISING**
Is Raiden's spin-off
worth the wait?

Changing Times



I go way back with *Final Fantasy*. In fact, Square Enix's long-running franchise is one of the reasons I'm in a position to

write this now – when I was 14, a friend lent me *Final Fantasy X* on PS2, and it changed my life. It was the first JRPG I ever played, and the imagination of Squaresoft's designers blew me away, such was the sense of place in Spira, the game's setting. I sunk 400 hours into *FFX*. No regrets.

From there, I played every *Final Fantasy* in some capacity – and out of all of them, the *XIII* subseries has proved to be the most critically divisive. *Lightning Returns*, our cover game this month, is the direct result of Square Enix reacting to this. More open than the previous two games and heavier on exploration, this is as close to a *Kingdom Hearts*-style action RPG as we've ever seen from the series. You can read about how Square Enix is making that work on page 6.

Meanwhile, another series that brought me to the dance returns this month: *Metal Gear Solid*, with the much-awaited spin-off *Rising* (and hopefully marking one of the last times I have to write *Revengeance* in this magazine, which no spell-checker ever likes). It's a double-header of esteemed PlayStation franchises that we bombard you with this month – and, like us, they've both been around since the early days of the PSone. Enjoy the issue and get in touch.

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Your gateway to the esoteric world of PlayStation



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REVIEWS

EVERY GAME ON PS3
& PS VITA RATED!
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Yup, it's awesome – read the first review now



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The zombie sequel sneaks up on us a few months from now.

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Our designer, Andy, originally called the above *Gran Theft Auto*. Imagine that.

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Another multiplayer hands-on! Find out how *Tomb Raider* fares online.

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We revisit Konami's masterpiece.

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We won't judge you here.

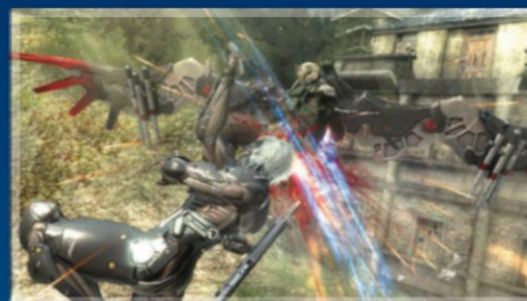
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Basically, Samuel should really stop playing *Lego* games and complete *Far Cry 3*.

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Gearbox's FPS/RPG hybrid is still amazing, several months on.



EXCLUSIVELY ON YOUR DISC



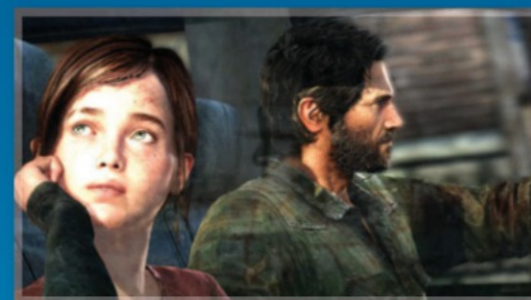
METAL GEAR SOLID SPECIAL
Metal Gear Rising, *Ground Zeroes* and *The Phantom Pain* (or, *Metal Gear Solid 5*) – we speculate over what the future of *Metal Gear* holds.

LIGHTNING RETURNS: FFXIII
You've seen it on the cover, now watch it on the disc! The first trailer of *Lightning Returns* offers a snippet of *Final Fantasy*'s revamp.



HUGE VIDEO REVIEWS
Ni No Kuni, *DmC*, *Devil May Cry* and *Anarchy Reigns* are all covered on our disc this month, with us talking over the top of it all.

THE LAST OF US MULTI-ANGLE
Watch this excellent behind-the-scenes featurette on *The Last Of Us* as the game nears release. We ruddy well can't wait to play it.



SEE THE BACK PAGE FOR MORE!



LIGHTNING RETURNS

THE FUTURE OF FINAL FANTASY REVEALED

CLOSER THAN EVER TO A REAL-TIME ACTION RPG, *LIGHTNING RETURNS*, THE FINAL PART OF THE FINAL FANTASY XIII SUB-SERIES, MAY BE SQUARE ENIX'S MOST EXPERIMENTAL TITLE IN YEARS. WE GOT A FIRST LOOK AT THE GAME BEFORE CATCHING UP WITH DIRECTOR MOTOMU TORIYAMA AND SERIES OVERSEER YOSHINORI KITASE ABOUT FINAL FANTASY'S PLACE IN THE MODERN AGE...

When people discuss how Japanese RPGs have weakened next to their Western counterparts during this generation, *Final Fantasy XIII* is always their first go-to example. The focus of the argument, of course, is the linear structure of the 2010 PS3 title – how the first 20-30 hours are more or less on a long pathway. Be damned the beautifully-composed combat system and the Crystarium's diverse customisation options; in the noisy modern age of social media, the more extreme, vocal players made their minds up about *Final Fantasy's* 'new direction' and called time on the series.

Square Enix addressed this criticism with *Final Fantasy XIII-2*, the most open-ended series entry ever, where players are left to their own devices to devise a structure for their adventure. It was a reinvention between sequels – but again, *XIII-2* inherited some of the backlash from its predecessor, and its innovative approach to storytelling was left underappreciated. In the face of that, then, why would Square Enix want to risk battering the hornets' nest with *Lightning Returns*, a final entry in that trilogy, when a *Final Fantasy XV* offers an easier chance at renewed optimism from the fans?

Well, the first answer might be business-related. Between them, *XIII* and *XIII-2* have amassed 9.7 million sales – this is one of the opening points made by Square Enix's Yoshinori

Kitase in the presentation of *Lightning Returns* we see. The aim is to hit over 10 million sales for the three titles, which seems likely given that they've only got 300,000 to go. There's a far more interesting second answer, however – this *Lightning* saga has apparently been planned for years, since before the PS3's launch, and the pink-haired, Cloud-esque titular heroine was always intended as the only playable character for this final entry.

"We made a decision that we were going to have a sole protagonist in the third instalment of the *Final Fantasy XIII* franchise since the very beginning, six years ago, possibly 2005, 2006, something like that," Kitase tells us later. "[I] had a long conversation with Toriyama-San here and Tetsuya Nomura about which character we should use in the third instalment of the series, and they thought we were going to have to have a female one because we hadn't had a female sole protagonist in the franchise before. We had Terra before in *Final Fantasy VI*, but that was a different concept, because every party member was like a main character, and this is the only one. We just wanted to have a female character."

Lightning's status as the only playable character has the biggest effect on the design of *Lightning Returns*. As opposed to the previous two games' defining combat mechanics – paradigm shifts and full parties for *XIII*, and the *Pokémon*-esque Feral Link in *XIII-2* – this allows you to move her around in combat with the left stick, while mapping action commands to the face buttons. It's a little bit *Kingdom Hearts* in style, and represents a sea change for a traditionally turn-based series where movement in >



THE GAME IS SET IN NOVUS PARTUS, A 500-YEAR-OLD LAND CREATED BY A MERGING OF PULSE AND VALHALLA AT THE END OF XIII-2, AND WHEN LIGHTNING ARRIVES, THE WORLD IS 13 DAYS AWAY FROM APOCALYPSE



> battle tended to be automated or rigid (*Final Fantasy XIII* is an exception). There's also a layer of complex strategy to consider – we'll get to that in a bit.

As previously discussed, the game is set in Novus Partus, a 500-year-old land created by a merging of Pulse and Valhalla at the end of XIII-2, and when Lightning arrives, the world is 13 days away from apocalypse. This is relayed to the player by a constantly ticking down clock at the top right-hand corner of the screen – it adds a sense of urgency and consequence to everything that the protagonist does as she wanders around these strange islands. The first locale we see in action is Luxerion, a religious city that looks rather *Assassin's Creed*-infused. Square Enix shows off the open world and day-and-night elements within the game by walking past a building where you can hear a choir singing, and entering the train station during the morning, where a large group of NPCs are presumably in the midst of a daily commute.

Luxerion is the first of four islands, all of which are designed to play out slightly differently with their own set of quests and varying geography. The example we're shown in the city is Lightning investigating clues behind a murder, following a set-up cutscene, which leads to this shady society rambling on about the "goddess". There's a stealth bit where she follows some chaps around, ducked behind objects as they keep moving, which again recalls *Assassin's Creed*, and not in a particularly interesting way – though it is a departure from traditional *Final Fantasy* gameplay, we suppose. What we see here is designed to showcase the variety of side-quests players will encounter in *Lightning Returns*, not all of which can be beaten in one playthrough.

We're then shown quite a scattershot microcosm of what *Lightning Returns* will be – Lightning has to hunt for a four-digit code to progress in one quest which leads her to a burnished number on a wall next to the city's boardwalk, another tasks her with taking down a loose behemoth and a later part sees her confronted by a darkly possessed Noel

LIGHTNING'S STORY SO FAR



A BRIEF REMINDER OF LIGHTNING'S CURRENT SITUATION

In case you didn't conquer every aspect of *Final Fantasy XIII*'s last two instalments, here's how Lightning ended up in Luxerion. First of all, XIII-2 tweaked the end of XIII so Lightning disappeared into another realm: Valhalla, where she defended humanity's creator from Caius. Then, she turned into a crystal at the end of XIII-2, the lead-up to which was outlined in the DLC package *Lightning's Story: Requiem Of A Goddess*, where you got to see that Caius conflict in full. Now, she's woken up to a whole new world in the far future – and thus begins *Lightning Returns*, where the world's end is counting down, and, presumably, Lightning wishes to meet her sister Serah once more, or risk being completely grumpy forever...(you now have to imagine these words floating into space, *Star Wars*-style, to ensure maximum excitement).

THE FUTURE OF FINAL FANTASY

Her hair is like ice cream. Raspberry ice cream.

Lightning will bump into a few old faces.

That's a big, *GTA III*-with-a-sniper rifle moon.

The worlds of *Lightning Returns* promise to be varied.

The combat animations are typically impressive.

“LIGHTNING RETURNS IS A MULTI-FACETED EXPERIENCE DRIVEN BY THIS COUNTDOWN TO THE END OF THE WORLD, WHICH CAN BE PROLONGED BY BEATING QUESTS”

Kreiss, one of *XIII-2*'s two protagonists, operating under the name 'Shadow Hunter'. It's quite a lot to absorb, but that seems to be the point; *Lightning Returns* is a multi-faceted experience driven by this countdown to the end of the world, which can be prolonged by beating quests. That's the element that brings it all together. The open structure is intriguing, and the murder investigation hints at a different type of quest we'll find in a world that seems slightly more realistic than the wild variety of environments we saw in the previous two instalments.

On the Noel front, he represents one of a few returning characters, including the much-maligned Hope, who acts as a kind of Otacon figure for Lightning, providing background support with a bit of voiceover. There's also a young girl called Lumina who Lightning appears to bond with, and she's a dead ringer for her sister, Serah – a resemblance that Square Enix is keen to point out.

On the gameplay front, it's obvious that Square Enix is using *Lightning Returns* to broaden the series' remit beyond just monster-killing in familiar locales. Indeed, the brand new environment shown to us, another of the four main locales known as the Wildlands, is an almost *Journey*-esque open desert space (you can even get Lightning to slide down sand

dunes) brought to life with large open spaces and dungeons, with director Motomu Toriyama mentioning that he's going for more of an adventure game-type vibe with this particular location. There are shades of *Shadow Of The Colossus* and *Indiana Jones* to it all; certainly a departure from Luxerion, and it creates a certain amount of intrigue about what the world's other two lands could hold.

Behind the scenes, *Lightning Returns* is very much focused on your version of the heroine, in terms of the way she is equipped. There are three ATB bars at once in *Lightning Returns* – each represents a 'style', basically a surrogate for paradigms, and they're pre-set combat options you can switch between at any time during battle.

You do this by tweaking her equipment and costume to produce a decent array of tactical options; instead of building a party, you're building a wardrobe. The reason there's more than one ATB bar cluttering up the HUD? Since it's just Lightning in this one, maintaining the momentum of party-based combat is contingent on her being able to attack at any time. Rather than have the players wait for it to charge, this theoretically means that *Lightning Returns* can maintain the pace of an action-based experience, encouraging players to keep moving with the left stick and attacking with the face buttons, all taking *Final Fantasy* one step closer to full real-time action. This would obviously represent an enormous sea change for the franchise as we know it, yet still maintains the now-familiar tactical switch element of the other *XIII* titles.

WHO'S THE BEST FINAL FANTASY HERO?

WE GIVE PLAYSTATION'S FINAL FANTASY ICONS THEIR BIGGEST CHALLENGE YET: ARBITRARY STATISTICS



CLOUD STRIFE FINAL FANTASY VII

"IT'S NOT MY PROBLEM."

SPIKY HAIR	90	AMNESIA	85
CHEERFULNESS	13	CROSSDRESSING	75

He thinks he's in SOLDIER! That's adorable, Cloud, but you're not. That was Zack, remember? Cloud pretty much became the template for JRPG heroes upon *Final Fantasy VII*'s release.

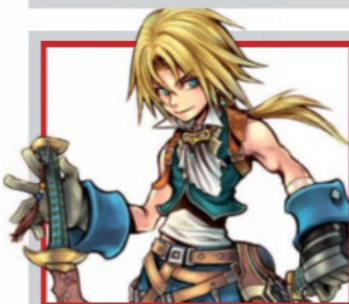


SQUALL LEONHART FINAL FANTASY VIII

"THE TRUE... GOAL OF SEED... TO SPREAD... SEEDS ALL OVER THE WORLD... FILL THE WORLD WITH FLOWERS."

RIVER PHOENIX IMPERSONATION	95	DANCING SKILLS	50
JUNCTIONING STRENGTH	255	LIONHEART	9999

Squall pretty much invented emo before emo was a thing. Grumpy, like Cloud, but taking himself a lot more seriously, Squall had an equally large impact on JRPG characters.



ZIDANE TRIBAL FINAL FANTASY IX

"PIECE OF CAKE. I'M AN ESCAPE ARTIST."

AMUSING TAIL	88	PRINCESS PROTECTION	80
THIEVERY	76	FUNKY HAIR	52

As *Final Fantasy IX* was a deliberate throwback to the SNES, so too was its protagonist Zidane, a slightly cheeky swashbuckling adventurer with a good heart, who isn't quite as miserable as some of his series stablemates.

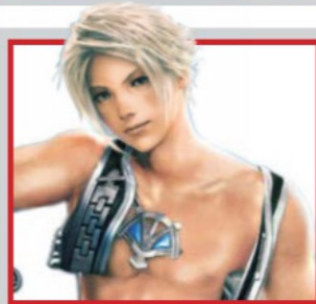


TIDUS FINAL FANTASY X

"I KNOW IT SOUNDS SELFISH, BUT THIS IS MY STORY!"

ENDLESS LAUGHING	99	BLITZBALL	92
JECHT SHOT	120	ZIPLINE RIDING	83

Although none of the characters ever referred to him as Tidus – because you could change his name – he turned out to be a real contrast to *Final Fantasy*'s moodier protagonists, even if we'll never get over the infamous laughing scene.

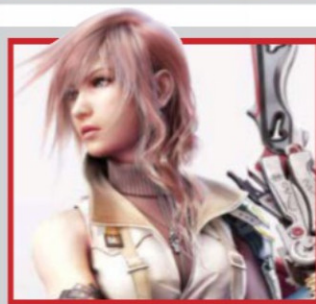


VAAN FINAL FANTASY XII

"DON'T GET ANY IDEAS. I TOLD YOU, IT'S MINE!"

INTERESTING CONVERSATION	14	INTRIGUING PROTAGONIST	8
UPSTAGED BY BALTHIER	90	SWORDPLAY	72

We're not massive fans of Vaan, since he's a bit like Tidus with even less personality, and finds himself being undermined by the far cooler Han Solo-esque Balthier at every turn.



CLAIRE 'LIGHTNING' FARRON FF XIII

"BETTER TO DIE THAN GET SENT TO PULSE. IT'S HELL WITHOUT THE BRIMSTONE."

ACROBATICS	87	INAPPROPRIATE COMBAT CLOTHES	79
GRUMPINESS	84	HORSERIDING	75

The sword-wielding heroine of *XIII* who disappeared to another realm in *XIII-2*, Lightning is the spark who kicked off the entire story by rebelling against those bastards in Cocoon.

> "We're hoping that's going to give extra depth to the combat," says Toriyama, explaining the style system. We ask the director if he sees real-time action as the future of the JRPG, citing the previous strong examples set by *Crisis Core*, *Dissidia* and of course *Kingdom Hearts* in creating valid experiences that cross these genres. "Yes, I think when we talk about the visual side of the battles, if you think about the traditional RPG or JRPG, if you like, [driven] by command battle systems, you have to wait for your enemy to attack you, which is highly unrealistic. In order to pursue a more realistic depiction of combat, I think this is the way – the mainstream way, anyway – in an RPG in general."

While this could be the key to *Final Fantasy*'s future, however, contemporising the series in a fashion that could answer critics of both the franchise and its sub-genre, Toriyama sees intense strategy as another aspect that's hard-wired into Square Enix's series. "But on the other hand, that strategic element and command battle elements, which were the case with *Final Fantasy XIII* and *XIII-2*, is still there in this latest instalment. In this game you can see three Active Time Battle bars on the screen and you can change into costumes for the best customisation possible, so it's not entirely an action game, it's not action enough to be solely intuitive. It's more like you have to think about it – we believe that's one of the great legacies from *XIII* and *XIII-2* that we're still sticking to."

Some of the options border on the bizarre, like putting Lightning in a dress that wouldn't look out of place at the Oscars – but the point is, you can personalise her. The character and story may be more or less set in motion, but in a greater way than the last two games, you can tweak the protagonist to your liking. We're shown a large *Dragon Age II*-

Look, it's Serah! No, she just looks like her.



THE FUTURE OF FINAL FANTASY



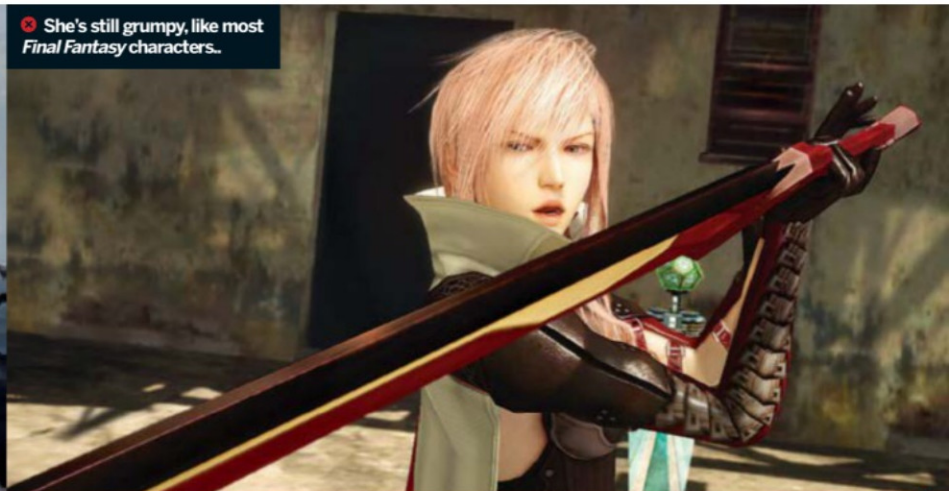
There's a heck of a lot of customisation available.



NOT SURE ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE FINAL FANTASY FRANCHISE ITSELF, BUT OBVIOUSLY THERE ARE A LOT OF GREAT STUDIOS UNDER THE UMBRELLA



Traditional series enemies return.



She's still grumpy, like most Final Fantasy characters.



These things have been bastards in both XIII titles so far.

style market square littered with different shops, more than either of the past two *Final Fantasy* titles where purchasing items felt like a quiet aside, another way that Square Enix relays the open world take of *Lightning Returns*.

What you have is an interesting mixture of old and new, of *XIII* and *XIII-2*'s leftover DNA and a genuine crossover into unexplored territory for the main *Final Fantasy* series. Square Enix talks a lot about crafting the game from fan feedback – it's reactionary design that seems like it's aiming to please both critics and those who are eagerly awaiting Lightning's fate. So, is *Lightning Returns* confused and pandering to too many audiences, or is this a diverse and creative way to make a third entry? It's likely that a lot of fans have already made their minds up based on the past two instalments. What we've seen of *Lightning Returns* so far can only be counted as signs of life, however – an attempt to throw off the shackles of its sub-genre while not forgetting what *Final Fantasy* means to its audience.

Looking ahead past *Lightning Returns*, unless *Final Fantasy Versus XIII* does decide to rear its head again at

some point, having been announced over seven years ago (and given that the generation is winding down, you'd expect it to be a next-gen title), it looks like this will be the close of *Final Fantasy*'s age on PlayStation 3. Where the series goes from here is anyone's guess, but this is certainly the last story in Lightning's saga. "I would like it to be an opportunity for players to learn why Lightning is so strong – on the surface, anyway – so through that process, you will get to learn more about her and like her as a character," Toriyama explains to us, on what impact he hopes the trilogy will leave behind on players.

Square Enix is a very different company to the one it was ten years ago – while the entire *XIII* project is the by-product of its Japanese studio, we ask Kitase if he's considered a Western collaboration to build future *Final Fantasy* titles, given the strength of studios like *Deus Ex* creator Eidos Montreal. "Not sure about the future of the *Final Fantasy* franchise itself, but obviously there are a lot of great studios under the umbrella, and I myself have been communicating with creators in those studios, at the Montreal studio, and also

ⓧ Lightning's outfits shape her abilities.



ⓧ The Crystal Tools tech still looks fantastic.



ⓧ There are lots of fancy buildings in Luxerion.



“THERE ARE A LOT OF GAMES THAT CAN GIVE YOU FUN, BUT I WANT FINAL FANTASY TO BE MORE THAN THAT”

> Crystal Dynamics in America. I've been very impressed that these developers are very enthusiastic about making great games in future, so from my point of view I would be [creatively] stimulated without a collaboration, so I would like to keep communicating with those studios in future."

For now, then, *Final Fantasy* firmly remains a Japanese venture. Given that he's steered the entire XIII sub-franchise, as well as being one of the key minds behind *Final Fantasy*'s PlayStation golden era, we ask Kitase what *Final Fantasy* means to him as a creator when he considers it in the context of his own life. "Obviously we celebrated the 25th anniversary of the franchise last year – 25 years ago I was an undergraduate, and obviously I was a keen game player back then. But as the player I was then, the *Final Fantasy* franchise meant exploring the maps, going to different locations; what really stood out were the stories and drama. I really liked it as a user. Now, 25 years on, as a creator, it's the kind of tradition I wants to pass down to the next generation. There are a lot of games that can give you fun, but I want *Final Fantasy* to be more than that – I want it to be something that resonates with your mind, or moves you, or appeals to your emotions. That's the kind of game I want to create." ⓧ

IS THIS FINAL FANTASY XV?

SQUARE ENIX'S LUMINOUS ENGINE WILL APPARENTLY BE MAKING ANOTHER APPEARANCE AT E3 2013 – BUT WHAT DOES AGNI'S PHILOSOPHY HINT ABOUT THE NEXT FINAL FANTASY?

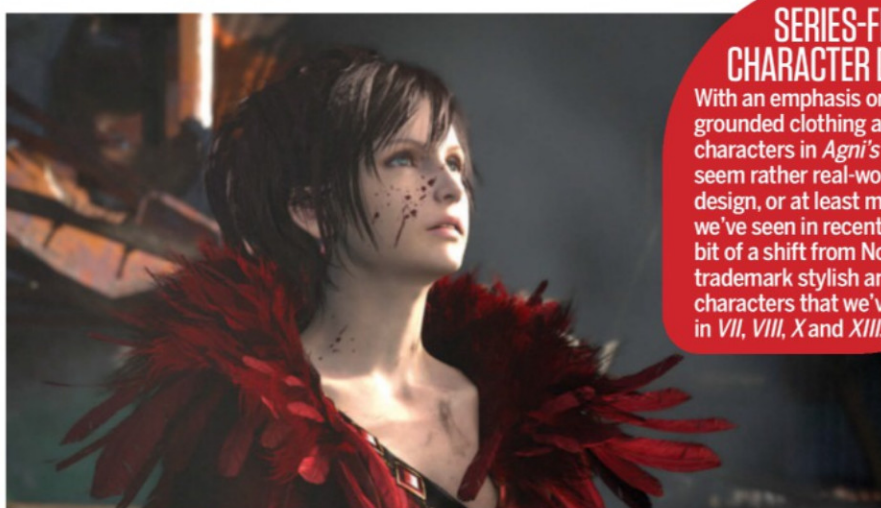
A VISUAL DEPARTURE

The choice of colour for *Agni's Philosophy* at least hints at the different sorts of worlds we could see in a *Final Fantasy* game next-gen – where the *XIII* titles have bright palettes, this looks far more restrained, which has its own artistic advantages.



SERIES-FIRST CHARACTER DESIGNS

With an emphasis on more grounded clothing and looks, the characters in *Agni's Philosophy* seem rather real-world in their design, or at least more so than we've seen in recent times. A bit of a shift from Nomura's trademark stylish and detailed characters that we've seen in *VII*, *VIII*, *X* and *XIII*.



A MORE OPEN FINAL FANTASY?

Lightning Returns hints at the way forward for *Final Fantasy* – and after the mixed user response to *XIII*'s gorgeous corridor structure, we can't see them going back from a more open design for the next big instalment.



A GAME USING THE TECH IS COMING

That's a given. We're not sure what, yet, and the core *Final Fantasy* team is obviously hard at work on *Lightning Returns* – but the first steps of a new series entry using this tech have been made. Now we just wait to see what form that will take.



SCARIER?

Nothing's ever scared us about *Final Fantasy*, but this thing? Brrr. *Final Fantasy* could use a tonal shift in its next instalment, just because *XIII* has been so omnipresent as a series during this generation, and some messed-up creature designs might shake it up a bit.



AGNI'S PHILOSOPHY RETURNS AT E3 2013

Square Enix's Julien Merceron told French website *FF Dreams* that this was the case – around June of this year we'll see *Agni's Philosophy* rear its head again on another platform. What platform could that be? Merceron couldn't say, but it's fairly obvious.



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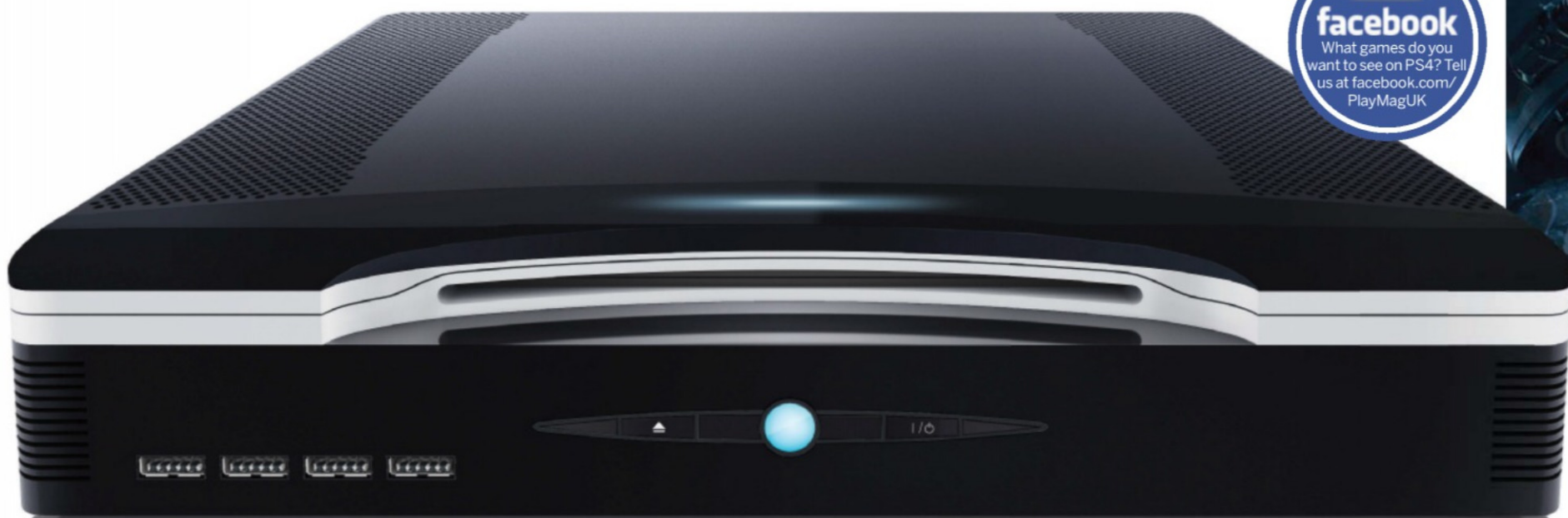
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Need To Know



LEGO Marvel Incoming

In what is a fairly surprising move, *LEGO Marvel Super Heroes* has been announced for a late 2013 release on PS3. Why's this a big deal? Well, Warner Bros owns *Traveler's Tales* and DC Comics, Marvel's biggest rival – still, given the LEGO games' recent form, we consider this excellent news.



PLAYSTATION 4

WHAT THE DEVELOPERS THINK

Wondering what developers think of all this next-gen stuff? We asked around to see what the expert opinion is on the incoming console

PS4. What is it good for? Well, so far we aren't too sure, but we do know it's coming soon and we do know it's gonna be really darn sweet. The codename

"Orbis" has been thrown around the internet for ages and it's likely both Sony and Microsoft will be announcing their new consoles over the next few months.

Getting concrete details out of people at this stage is impossible, but speculation is a different story. We asked David Braben, fabled developer of yore and the man responsible for space trading masterpiece *Elite*, and Stewart Gilray, founder of developer Just Add Water, what they were expecting for the next gen.

"New technology is always exciting and next generation consoles from the big players especially so," says Braben. "However, we are seeing some big changes as to what is a console. We've seen announcement recently of three more console entrants into the fray: Nvidia's Shield, Valve's Piston, Ouya's... Ouya, and of course the launch of the Wii U – but we also have near-console experiences on mobile platforms like iOS – indeed the distinction between playing a game on a big TV using an Apple TV/iPhone 5 and a console is a pretty subtle one. What about Raspberry Pi too – is that a console?"

Gilray is a little more apprehensive at the ever-increasing power of new

consoles. "At the end of the day, they can keep adding and adding and adding more powerful hardware, but artists will have to create that artwork; I'd like to see the next gen just be more capable, ie being able to run a game at 1080p 60fps or 120fps is what I'm after, rather than seeing 1000000x more polys etc."

It's a statement that artists worldwide will reciprocate, but a huge jump in graphics power is practically a given with a new generation of consoles, and something consumers expect. Remember seeing PS2 for the first time and thinking "How can it ever look better than this?"

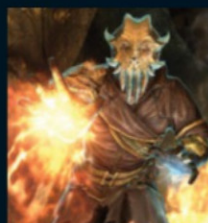
When it comes to the differences between the PS4 and the next Xbox,

IMPORTANT GAMING NEWS YOU CANNOT AFFORD TO MISS



Gray Fox Rising

Brilliant *Metal Gear Solid* creator Hideo Kojima recently revealed that he originally suggested that iconic cyborg ninja Gray Fox be the protagonist for *Metal Gear Rising* back in its early days of planning. His team, however, convinced him that Raiden was the better choice.



Skyrim DLC on PS3

Finally! *Skyrim* DLC should be arriving on PSN since, at the time of writing, Bethesda promised it would be arriving at some point in February. Bit late, really, but at least it's here. We've reviewed the two biggest packs in this issue; *Hearthfire* is boring and not worth your time or money.



Sony fined for PSN hack

The UK government has fined Sony £250,000 for the PSN hack in 2011. At the time of writing, Sony is planning on appealing the Independent Commissioner's Office's decision. Still, it's not like that £250,000 is going to the people whose accounts were hacked, is it? Sigh.



✖ We've waited years for *Aliens: Colonial Marines*, and it's rocked up just at the generation's close.



✖ Wii U has kicked off next-gen, but it's not exactly a powerhouse in tech.



✖ *The Last of Us* is hopefully a glimpse of the future of third-person action titles.

Gilray isn't sure. "Who knows? We've all heard rumours that Xbox will have all sorts of Kinect type stuff, but unless you're working on both we don't know. I think both will need to look at lower price points at launch, so we'll see."

Microsoft focusing on Kinect is likely considering the success it's seen so far. Will Sony try and compete with more Move peripherals or focus on their existing, hardcore audience? With smart planning, both are easily possible.

Although most gamers seem happy with their current consoles, some in the industry can't wait for the next generation to boost sales and realise some new visions. The time feels right for the next gen, but have we already waited too long?

"I'm not sure," says Gilray. "PS3 is a year younger than the 360, and has sold one million units more, yet it's still called a failure. Sony had problems for the first 12-18 months with their online service, but have since redeemed themselves, in terms of age. I think this year marks the same point we went from PS2 to PS3, so I think we're good and I think 2013/2014 will be interesting for all of us."

Braben is more assured: "No [it hasn't been too long]. It is very similar to previous generations. There has been an interval of around six years between each generation ever since the first home computers. We saw the first of the next generation with the Wii U at the end of last year, so we are still on track!"

One thing both can agree on is they are looking forward to the next gen. "I'm a hardware geek, so I think I just want to know what they'll do at launch and what exciting new options we'll have to work with, I hope they don't go down the 'cloud gaming' route as I don't think anywhere has the infrastructure yet," says Gilray.

"We are seeing such big changes to the way people get games, the way they pay for them, it is extremely exciting to see what comes out of it" says Braben. And when do they expect the next gen to release? Gilray: "I think any time from October 2013 to March 2014, but who knows?" Braben? "I'm afraid I can't say." Interesting...

4 SIGNS SONY IS WINDING THINGS DOWN

EVERYTHING IS COMING OUT NOW

How many games are scheduled for late next year? Few to none. How many games are scheduled for the next couple of months? BLOODY LOADS. As well as Sony exclusives *The Last of Us* and *God Of War: Ascension*, we've got stuff like *BioShock Infinite*, *Aliens Colonial Marines*, *Metal Gear Rising* and *GTA V* all releasing in a short amount of time. Wonder why?

WE ARE ON THE THIRD VERSION OF THE PS3

The super slim came out late last year, heralding the second redesign of the PS3. Neither the original PlayStation or the PS2 went through three iterations, so a new cut-price PS3 is a good sign that some shiny new hardware is on the horizon.

THE WII U EXISTS

Nothing spurs a company into action than its competitors making the first move. Say what you will about the Wii U but it has effectively kicked off the "next generation" of consoles. Sony were last out of the blocks last generation – will they be eager to beat Microsoft to the punch this time?

IT'S BEEN LONG ENOUGH

The PS3 came out in 2007 and the Wii and 360 over a year prior to that. The average console life-cycle has been around five to six years previously, so the timing is just right for the next batch of lovely new hardware.



DEADLY PREMONITION

THE BEST WORST GAME ON PS3



Five things you need to know about Deadly Premonition, as explained by director Swery65. Isn't that right, Zach?

1 THE MOST DIVISIVE GAME EVER

Polarising critics when it was released on 360 in 2010, *Deadly Premonition* earned a cult following with its range of scores, which ranged from 30 to 100 per cent. Mechanically rough, in this case originality wins over polish – Swery65 admits this reaction helped secure the game more attention. “That gave the opportunity for the game to be even further known by people because it was in the *Guinness Book Of Records*, because it’s a game people love or hate. So it’s good news, actually.”

2 ICONIC CHARACTERS

Agent Francis York Morgan, the protagonist of *Deadly Premonition*, chats aloud to an unseen figure known as ‘Zach’ – initially a metaphor for you, the player. Morgan’s like a stranger version of Agent Dale Cooper from classic TV drama *Twin Peaks*, and he’s terrifically fun. He was originally intended to be female, however, and based on Jodie Foster. “We finally decided to have a male character,” Swery65 explains. “After that, we were very satisfied with it because we could add many unique characteristics onto that male character. So we’re very happy with it.”

3 SET IN WEIRD, SMALL TOWN AMERICA

We must once again mention the series *Twin Peaks* in describing *Deadly Premonition*’s setting – the Pacific Northwest town of Greenvale bears more than a few similarities to the David Lynch show, especially in the range of oddballs

living there. This setting was created as such to appeal to Western players. “Firstly, we made the main characters American and this game is set in a US suburban city,” the director explains. “My original idea was to set this game in a Canadian suburban city but when I spoke to [producer] Tomio Kanazawa about it, Tomio wanted me to change it to a US city.”

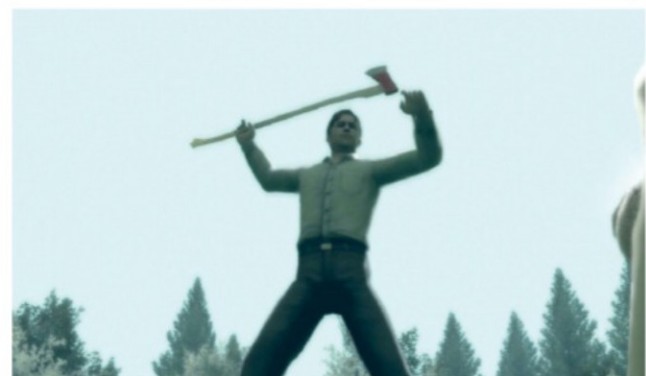
4 CHANGES FOR PS3

Along with general mechanical tweaks and Move controls, there are extra story sections in the PS3 version, too. “For this *Director’s Cut*, additional story is there, so for the first time players will have additional story, which adds different feeling to this particular game.” Essentially, we get the complete version of the *Deadly Premonition* story – this is a proper PlayStation exclusive, which is ruddy lovely.

5 SEQUEL INCOMING?

After tremendous success upon its original release, Swery65 already has plans for the continued story of Agent Morgan. “We are already in discussion to make something afterwards and to work with this character York again, it could be *Deadly Premonition 2* or *Deadly... Something*. Not sure yet. But we’re already in discussion.” Trust us, after you’ve ventured through the bizarre odyssey of *Deadly Premonition*, you’ll be eager for more. So says Mister Stewart.

Deadly Premonition is released in March on PS3. Look out for a review around then.



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TOP 5 GAMES THAT NEED A SEQUEL

Big franchises and numerous sequels are where the money lies in the games industry, but for every *Assassin's Creed 7.5*, there is a game that has been unfairly forgotten, consigned to the dustbin of fate, never to be seen again. No more! Here are five games that we would love to see sequels to...



1 ZONE OF THE ENDERS: THE 2ND RUNNER

The second *Zone Of The Enders* is bloody great, and criminally overlooked. The first game was decent, but the sequel improved everything and had sweet anime cut-scenes too. The new *ZOE HD Collection* should hopefully bring some new eyes to the franchise, and *ZOE 3* is said to be in development using Kojima's FOX Engine. We can't wait.

2 APE ESCAPE 3

Sure, there are loads of *Ape Escapes*, but there hasn't been a proper entry in the series since the third instalment, back in 2006. We've had party game spin-offs, but are still waiting for a return to the net-swinging, monkey-catching antics of old. *Ape Escape 4* has been rumoured to be in development for a while now, while protagonist Spike was a character in *PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale*, so the future seems bright for the franchise.



3 DARK CLOUD

Dark Cloud! If you've played it, you love it. One of the first action-RPGs for the PS2, *Dark Cloud* was, for many, their introduction to the genre, and remembered fondly. Besides 2003 sequel *Dark Chronicle*, we've heard nothing from the franchise since. Get on it, Level-5!

4 MARVEL: ULTIMATE ALLIANCE 2

There are few better ways for four mates to have fun around a TV than by playing through one of the *Ultimate Alliance* games. A bunch of awesome characters to choose from, and simple brawling action made them great to pick up and play. We want a new one! As long as it still has Daredevil in it.



twitter

What would you love to see a sequel to? Tell us at twitter.com/PlayMag_UK



5 TACTICS OGRE: LET US CLING TOGETHER

The PSP remake of this tactical-RPG classic gave a new generation of gamers the chance to experience one of the best examples of the genre. The last new *Tactics Ogre* game came out in 2001, so we wouldn't hold out huge hope for a new one. We can dream, though. We can dream.

AND FOUR YOU SHOULD AVOID

Seriously. Just look at 'em



CALL OF DUTY

Come on guys, it's getting really old now. Take a few years out and come back to us with something properly new and exciting.



WWE '13

A new game each year lives little room for real improvement. Why not update the roster with DLC and take time to make a great new game?



FAMILY GUY: BTTM

A massively awful shooter, hopefully the low sales of this title have ensured that there's no sequel in the offing for *Family Guy*.



RATCHET & CLANK

There has been at least one *Ratchet & Clank* game every year now for as long as we can remember, each one a bit worse than the last.

ARE PS3 GAMES ON PSN TOO EXPENSIVE?

YOUR SHOUT
Play readers have their say

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Even with the PS+ discount on some of them it's still cheaper to buy them off the internet and keep much valued hard drive space for the freebies!! I don't think I paid £50 for a Mega Drive game back in the dark old days of the early Nineties when we was all rich, apparently!?! **PHIL ROBINSON**

All these games that are overpriced on PSN keep appearing though, so somewhere there must be some brainless morons with more money than sense that keep buying them!
RICHARD CROMBIE

All download versions of games are usually more expensive than the physical copies, its almost as if they don't want to turn the industry download only.
ALEX FORRESTER

No they retail around at same price as 360 versions. but second hand psn games are priced higher than 360 ones. **ALI AFRAZ**

When you can get the same physical version of a game online retailing at £29.99 TOPS why on earth would you pay £59.99 for the same game & lose upto 15gb space on your HDD. Don't make sense lol.
DARREN GALT

You see PSN games priced at £59.99 say and there are five star reviews under it from buyers; who's that daft to pay that money for the game and then review it?
STU VERNON

Games in general are too expensive (Australia: you're looking at \$90 – \$110 and that's not even collector ed prices). **CLARE COSTIGAN**

YouTube
youtube.com/PlayMagUK

There should be some kind of a benefit for buying digital. The price is way too high, because 60 quid is way too much. **HOLLIE976**

Some games are soooo expensive I don't even know where to start!
Family Guy isn't worth 60p never mind 60 quid. **VIRTU4COP**

£60 FOR SOME OF THIS GET OUT **SIR CALLUM THE EXPECTED**

When does it stop? The line is... there is no line! Line, you are nothing!
If there used to be a line here, let it be known there is line no more!
WISECHIMP12

twitter
twitter.com/PlayMag_UK

Of course. All the overheads of retailers removed, and the psn versions are still dearer.
@ANDYMCCRIMMON

Yes, but that will change as the reliance on retail diminishes. I have *Sleeping Dogs* and *Hitman* on my HDD, bargains off the store
@XEPHON70

Yes by a mile. I think *SSX* was £60 when it was released. Really?
@KENNY_STUBBS

Absolutely yes. *NFS Most Wanted* was £60 on PSN! What's that about? Could buy two physical copies for that! **@ZERO+GEEK**

In short yes, most PSN games really :(**@GAMERSHUB4**

That's like asking if water is wet
@ROCKETMINX

Even if they were the same price as retail I'd still buy retail so I could trade it in. **@CHALKY83**

Short answer: yes. Long answer: hell yes!!!!!!
@RUSSELGUPPY

Yes, without a doubt.
@GUNNER_TURRET

Yes, even when on "sale".
@DORTS25

Play Online

Want to share your thoughts? Shout into our digital ears at facebook.com/PlayMagazineUK, youtube.com/PlayMagUK and [@PlayMag_UK](https://twitter.com/PlayMag_UK), where we hang out when we're not doing work (i.e. all the ruddy time).

ANATOMY OF... TEKKEN'S JIN KAZAMA

Tekken has been synonymous with Playstation since day one, and when you think of Tekken, you think of tortured, hair-sprayed protagonist, Jin Kazama. He's gone from a good guy to a bad guy to a good guy again, and will next be seen (fingers crossed) in Tekken X Street Fighter...

(GRAND) DADDY ISSUES

It's fair to say that Jin hasn't had a great family life. The child of Tekken 2 characters Kazuya Mishima and Jun Kazama, Jin never met his dad growing up, as he was dropped into a volcano by Jin's granddad Heihachi shortly before he was born. Standard. Jin was raised by his mum until she was killed by the ancient being Ogre. He then trained in all manner of martial arts with Heihachi before finding out he was proper evil. And then his dad came back, and was also evil! Duh.

THE DEVIL INSIDE

Oh yeah, not only is most of his family evil, but Jin and his dad are also carriers of the "devil gene", for some reason. Don't make them angry, or they will grow horns and wings and shoot lasers out of their eyes! The devil gene is the source of Jin's cool shoulder tattoo, and something he struggles to suppress constantly. His attempts to rid himself of his curse form a large part of his story.

SWITCHING ALLEGIANCES

In his first few appearances Jin was the good guy, the main character that the story revolved around. Tekken 5 ends with him gaining control of Heihachi's Mishima Zaibatsu, but at the start of Tekken 6 Jin uses his newfound power to declare war.... on every country in the WORLD. What the hell, dude? Turns out this was all a cunning ruse to coax out evil creature Azazel, so Jin can kill it, save humanity, and rid himself of the devil gene in the process. Not quite sure if the ends justified the means on this one.

HAIR-RAISING

Look at that hair. Just look. Is that even possible in real life? Maybe with a few gallons of gel and spray, but even then, would it stay perfectly coiffed after kicking the shit out of a robot? The entire Mishima bloodline are known for their gravity-defying manes, and Jin is no exception. Take a gander at his uncle, Lars Alexandersson, for spiky locks even more ridiculous.



AND HE'S THE NORMAL ONE

Jin and his family are actually among the more realistic characters in Tekken lore. Only about the half the cast are actually human, for goodness sake. Take a look:



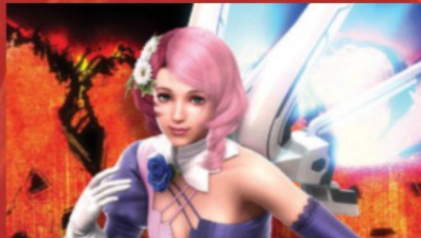
KUMA AND PANDA

A bear and a panda. These guys have been around in the world of Tekken for ages, and at least it makes a bit of sense. Do you think you could win a fight against a bloody bear? How about one with a farting move that's a one-hit KO? Extra points must go to Ling Xiaoyu for coming up with such an imaginative name for her pet panda.



ROGER JR.

A boxing kangaroo carrying its baby boxing kangaroo in its pouch! Who is designing these characters? Apparently the results of Mishima Zaibatsu experimentation, which makes you question who the hell is in charge of their laboratories. Cure cancer, then make boxing animals! Priorities!



ALISA BOSCONOVITCH

A robot girl with bright pink hair, chainsaw arms, wings that pop out of her back, a detachable head that also EXPLODES, and a silly dress. Is this fair? How do you beat that? "I can punch and kick." "That's nice, I can fly you 30 feet into the air, piece you with a chainsaw and slam you into the concrete." "Oh."



GON

Anyone who played Tekken 3 back in the day will recognize Gon, the cheeky little orange dinosaur with a liking of beachballs and farts (again, Tekken?). Gon is actually the star of a popular manga in Japan, so seems unlikely to pop up again in a future Tekken game.

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STATE OF PLAY

PS VITA: ONE YEAR ON

A year after the console's European release, we take a look at the Vita's performance and the prospects for this wonderful handheld's future...



The PlayStation Vita was packed with promise from the moment it was announced. A powerful machine with a beautiful high resolution screen and two analogue sticks that you don't even have to buy separately, the new portable PlayStation looked like it could be nothing other than a resounding success. But a year after it first appeared on the market, sales figures suggest the console has had a much gentler impact than expected.

The Vita had a solid launch in Japan with 1.2 million sold in its first three months, but instead of picking up the pace when the console arrived in other regions, things have actually slowed right down. For the April to June period of 2012, Sony would only quote a figure that included sales for both the Vita and the its predecessor. Given

that the PSP still regularly outsells the Vita in native Japan, that's not a promising sign.

As a result, Sony has brought down its predictions for Vita sales for this financial year, but the big bosses don't seem worried. If they were, we would have seen a price cut, which seems to be the done thing when your handheld console isn't selling well. But all we've heard of so far is the possibility of a proper cut next year, and that's only if someone can figure out how to make the thing more cheaply in the first place.

Maybe those in the know expect the Vita to just build up slowly, another console with a projected ten or so years ahead of it to iron out the kinks and make a name for itself; CEO Kaz Hirai did say that "long term is what is important". Or perhaps Sony just has bigger fish to fry, the kind that you plug into your television and play next-gen *Gran Turismo* on...

“ Maybe those in the know expect the Vita to build up slowly, another console with a projected ten or so years ahead of it to iron out the kinks and make a name for itself ”



WHAT VITA GOT WRONG

1 MARKETING

We all know that the Vita is awesome, and that once people have one they find plenty to love. But Sony has to work on actually getting the consoles into the hands of gamers in the first place.

2 CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS: DECLASSIFIED

The Vita really needed a solid first-person shooter to show off its dual analogue sticks. But with an embarrassingly short campaign and truly feeble multiplayer, *Black Ops: Declassified* just doesn't fit the bill.

3 LACK OF FUTURE GAMES

The Vita is great, and we're desperate for more quality games to add to our collection. Sadly, aside from *Tearaway*, *Killzone Mercenary*, and indie hit *Lone Survivor*, there isn't much coming up in 2013 to excite us.

4 MEMORY CARDS

We understand the desire for Sony to have a special memory card just for the Vita, but do they have to be so expensive? Given that full games can often be around 4GB, this hidden cost is significant.

5 PLAYSTATION MOBILE

It was clever of Sony to try to use the rise of smartphone games like this, but at the time of writing there are only 42 games available on PlayStation Mobile. And one of them is about massaging girls' legs.



“The Vita is still in its youth, and as it continues to grow into a more well-rounded device, more and more features have been added. PlayStation Mobile is nothing to write home about yet, but PlayStation Plus is off to a promising start”

Even if Sony doesn't care that the Vita isn't selling as well as expected, we do, because it's an awesome console with some very good games. But without a significant price cut, how will more people be convinced to make the investment?

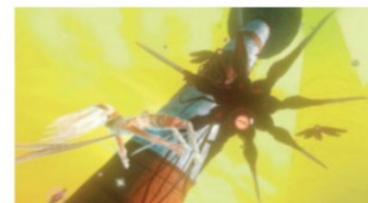
Well, the Vita is still in its youth, and as it continues to grow into a more well-rounded device, more and more features have been added. PlayStation Mobile is nothing to write home about yet, but PlayStation Plus is off to a promising start, and the collection of PSone Classics is becoming more and more impressive. The fact that you can use the Vita to play games like *Gex*, *Spyro The Dragon*, and *Tomba!* should be enough to convince longtime PlayStation fans to put one on their wish list.

We also have a brand new set of buzzwords to learn, what with Cross-Buy, Cross-Play, Cross-Save, Cross-Dress (that one might not be in relation to the Vita)

and the rest. A lot of PS3 games now come with a free download code for the Vita version, which is a nice little bonus if you've got the memory for it. Not only that, but you can start playing the game on the PS3, save your progress, and then continue on your Vita when you have to actually leave the house. There are even some PS3 games for which you can use your Vita as a separate screen and input device. To think, some people reckon you need a whole new home console for that sort of thing.

But the clincher, of course, is software. 2013 will bring us some exciting new Vita games, including *Killzone: Mercenary*, *Tearaway*, and *Lone Survivor*, and Sony has said that it is working to introduce an "attractive software lineup" over the coming months. But it'd take something as big as a portable *Gran Turismo* to sell a really significant number of consoles, and nothing quite so huge is currently on the horizon. As far as we know...

VITA'S BEST GAMES



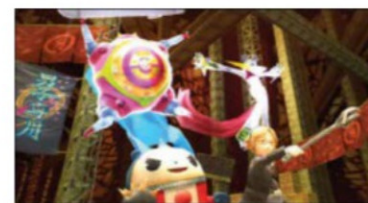
GRAVITY RUSH

The concept of gravity manipulation might put you off, but skip this and you'll miss out on a beautifully designed game with a unique story that really feels at home on the Vita.



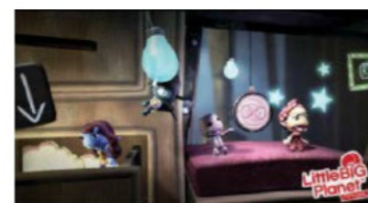
UNCHARTED: GOLDEN ABYSS

You can tell Naughty Dog kept an eye on this prequel, which has intense action and wit enough to stand proudly beside Drake's PS3 adventures, as well as a few Vita-specific tricks.



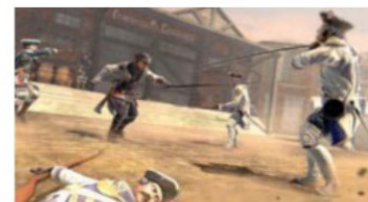
PERSONA 4: GOLDEN

Thank goodness for the capabilities of the Vita, which allowed for an enhanced port of this astonishingly deep RPG. Compared with other games of its kind, *Persona 4: Golden* nears perfection.



LITTLEBIGPLANET PS VITA

Sony could have just brought us a replica of *LittleBigPlanet 2* for the Vita and we would have been happy, but what we've got instead – a game that really uses the Vita's potential – makes us ecstatic.



ASSASSIN'S CREED III: LIBERATION

A real demonstration of the Vita's power, *Liberation* uses the same engine as *Assassin's Creed III*, which means protagonist Aveline gets to be just as badass – if not more so – than her buddy Connor.

Re:Play

You are the controller! But only on these pages

Democracy was built on everyone having a say, and we here at Play love democracy! As such, time for some letters. Freedom, justice, yeah!

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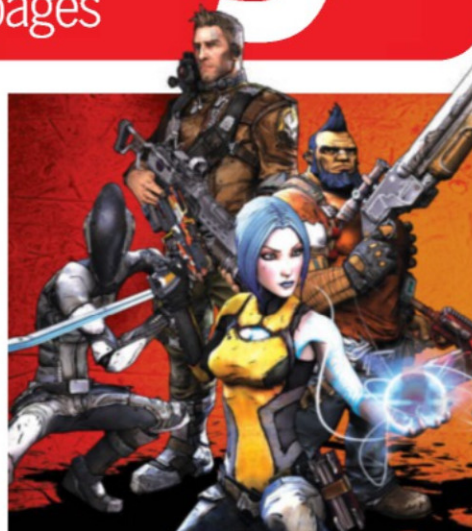
COMFORTING SOLITUDE

Dear **Play**,

I am growing increasingly concerned various developers are appearing to neglect the single-player element in FPS games and are seemingly concentrating all of their efforts on what is apparently considered to be the most important aspect of an FPS game – co-op online play.

Now don't get me wrong, co-op play in both the virtual and real world is great fun, but I firmly believe online play is not the be all and end all of playing an FPS game. Developers should never forget the importance of a single-player experience in any genre of game, because it is an integral part of a product and is richly appreciated by gamers of all ages.

Are reviewers and consumers more than happy to pay for a game that has a half baked single-player mode? Surely consumers are only receiving half a game if



FPS games are solely worth playing just for the multiplayer aspect?

I was sad to read ex-**Play** writer Ian Dransfield's statement for *Borderlands 2*: "The game is still worth a go if you're a classic Billy No-Mates. But if you're a normal person, with internet and friends, *Borderlands 2* is essential stuff."

Why should consumers accept a single-player campaign is seemingly secondary to co-op online play? It shouldn't be enough for the game to be just 'worth a go'; I want the single-player campaign to be just as essential as the co-op online element. Developers should carefully consider they are not wasting their time and resources to cater for a single-player audience of potentially millions of people.

Adrian Fisher

The FPS genre has always had a huge focus on multiplayer – look at *Unreal Tournament* or *Counter-Strike*. It's true that lots of people love a decent single-player campaign, but it's also true that even more people only play these games online. We at **Play** enjoy both – a rousing single-player story and crushing online competitors each offer their own pleasures. Games are a business, and if more people care about multiplayer, that's inevitably where the developer's focus will go.

STAR LETTER

PC Versus PS3

Hello good people of **Play**,

I seem to have lost my passion for gaming of late. My problem is my PC! I had, for many years, been happily gaming away on my PS3 (and many other consoles before it) whereas my brother had always been more into PC gaming. When *Crysis* came out my brother convinced me to build a kick ass PC, which I duly did. I bought, played and loved *Crysis*. But then I switched off my PC and carried on playing my PS3. Then *BF3* appeared and said it would melt PCs so I put it to task and it isn't just a bit prettier on PC, it's a totally different game!

So I started dabbling and upgrading my PC and then started playing more games on the PC. This at first seemed great, the games were prettier and all can be made to run at 60fps or more! Which is all well and good, but... I dunno, PC gaming has no soul

and the online is full of Jedis, hackers and generally unpleasant people.

So you see, my problem is this, I have spoiled my eyes with the beauty of PC gaming, but my heart isn't there, my heart is with consoles. But now I can't go back to comparatively not so pretty games at 30fps and below! I need the PS4 now! Then I can destroy my PC (I'll probably just turn it off actually) and go back to playing the prettiest pretty games on consoles.

Just thought I'd share my misery, thanks for listening.

Steven Higgins

Don't destroy your PC, Steven! In our lengthy gaming experience, the people you play online on any system is much the same. We'd argue it depends more on the game you are playing than the platform you are playing it on. The PS4 version of *Battlefield 4* will certainly stand up to the PC version of the game, and it's not like the PS3 version of *Battlefield 3* was bad.



• *Battlefield 4*. Battlefield! It'll look lovely on PlayStation 4.

Things you may have missed on NowGamer.com's YouTube page

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THE EVOLUTION OF ALIENS GAMES
FROM ALIEN TRILOGY TO AVP



THE WALKING DEAD
SURVIVAL INSTINCT RELEASE DATE



GOD OF WAR: ASCENSION
BETA FOOTAGE



WRITE IN AND WIN! If you're chosen as Star Letter, you win a game. This month we've got a copy of **Saints Row: The Third** to give away. It's Burt-tastic! And a good stopgap until GTA V gets here



THE BIG ISSUE

DO WE NEED A PS4?

Dear **Play**,

In the last issue, you ran a feature on the "PS3's 10 Year Lifespan" and asked how true that prior promise now seems. Well, if you ask me, it's still a realistic target. The rise in technology between new console releases has always been of a massive leap forwards – all of these "jumps" to the newest consoles have been huge steps forward in graphics, sound and technology. I personally don't believe that such a jump forward exists right now and this is why Sony and, indeed, Microsoft should both be in no rush to get a so-called "next gen" console out onto the market.

I own a very high specification PC alongside my PS3, I spent quite a lot of money and several years building said PC to the specifications that I wanted. The difference in quality between running a PS3 game alongside its "Ultra" setting PC rival is eye-opening at times, admittedly, but it's not on a scale of what we witnessed between the move from PS1 to PS2 or from PS2 to PS3. In fact if you take a game like *Uncharted 3* and, the soon to be released (we hope), *The Last Of Us*, these games are still verging on PC quality as regards graphics, movement, clarity, smoothness and overall graphical finesse. This is why I think that Sony can afford to wait as regards releasing a new console.

I still don't think there is enough evidence to suggest that Sony needs to be in a rush to get a PS4 out into the market. The PS3, when pushed to its limits, is still a console capable of producing breathtaking graphics, games and innovation. It's still able to rival the best that's out there, even six years after its initial launch. Releasing a PS4 now would make little to no sense, in my view. It would only bridge a very small gap. Would the extra expense of a brand new console be worth that small jump in quality? I'm not convinced... There is still loads of life left in the PS3. Whether it makes ten years or not is still debatable but there is no doubt in my mind that it can do another two years easily and still be as competitive as ever. Patience is a virtue. The PS3 is managing just fine right now.

Anthony Cox

You raise some good points Anthony, but a new generation of consoles is about more than a leap in graphics. Gaming is an industry, and nothing revitalises it more than an entirely new batch of hardware. Sales were down across the board in 2012 as people get a bit bored of the consoles they've had for years, and developers reach the limits of what they can do with current hardware. The games industry NEEDS a new generation, and soon.

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A book literally made of faces would be quite terrifying. Luckily it's just a social networking site!



Play

What would be your ideal PS4 launch title?

Like • Comment • Share • about an hour ago •

Teri Otis Redding *Killzone 4.*

Arthur Scroggins Would love it to be *Watch Dogs*, but that's just going to end up being like *Assassin's Creed* with a cellphone. i just called it!

Natasha Handy *Primal.*

Jai Perry Um anything but a *COD* game.

Tristan Jay Parker *Dragons Dogma 2!*

Jack Scanlon *GT6.*

Andy Easton *Mafia 3!!!*

Kevin Murphy *Uncharted 4* or a new *Ratchet And Clank.*

Darren Atkinson Do we really need a ps4? Especially when the world is in financial crisis. The ps3 is more than capable for the next few years. Look at *Darksiders II*. That game shows that we don't need another console as of yet

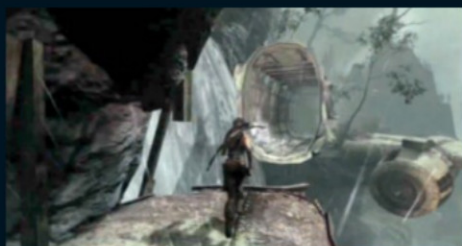
Andrew Atchison Oh and definitely *GT6* in launch line up but not as the headliner!

Thomas Davis *Hitman: Profession.* Square Enix Montreal are developing it, BUT IT DOES EXIST!!!!!!!



YouTube

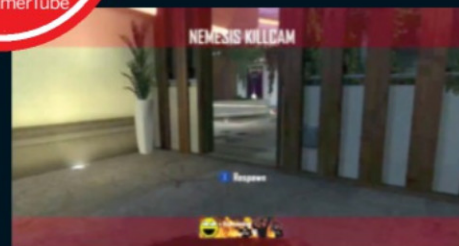
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TOMB RAIDER
NOWGAMER COMMENTARY



BATTLEFIELD 3: AFTERMATH
GAMEPLAY FOOTAGE



BLACK OPS II
NO PERKS!



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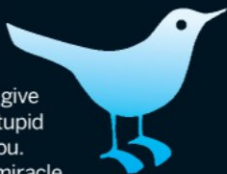
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Opinion, analysis and hilarity can be found on our website www.play-mag.co.uk so join the debate, tell us why we're wrong and make us cry a bit



Forum

Got something to talk about? Tell us on our forum: www.play-mag.co.uk/forum



Podcast

The **Play** team talks games every month
nowgamer.com/podcasts/nowgamer-podcasts/



☛ We're intrigued to see what they do with *Modern Warfare 4*.

MODERN SHAKESPEARE

Dear **Play**,

I was thinking about *COD* today (while I was playing it) and more specifically the *Modern Warfare* series.

Rumour is that *Modern Warfare 4* could be coming next year that would not make much sense because where could it possibly go from *MW3*? With Soap dead and Makarov dead who would Price have left to kill? Also surely if Infinity Ward DOES make *MW4*, it could clash with *Black Ops 2* because the final mission of *MW3* is set in 2017 (according to the *COD* wiki) and if they carry on the same storyline then they would likely pass each others paths. Maybe that is the plan...

The only way I could see the *MW* series carrying on is through Sgt. Foley and his squad, as they seemed to have gone on vacation over the course of *Modern Warfare 3*.

What is your view of this?

Adam Cracknell

We at **Play** hope that zombies mode has been canon all along, and undead Soap shows up at the last second to

save the day with his gruff Scottish charm. Honestly, the *Modern Warfare* "story" is so ridiculous that this is probably one of the more possible scenarios. Maybe a mission set in the Lake District? That would be pretty.

YEAR OF THE VITA

Dear **Play**,

I was really chuffed about the PS Vita in 2012. The quality of the games was great and I ended up downloading all my games from the PS Store, which was great as I wasn't juggling the game cards. I'm looking forward to the line up in 2013.

I'm currently thinking that in 2013 the Vita will become house to a bunch of games from indie developers. Hopefully it will draw in lots of ambitious Android/iOS developers and indie devs alike. It would be nice if Sony put their leg out to get some of them started (just asking politely).

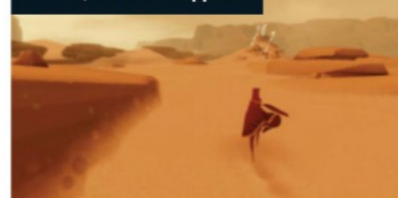
On another note, why is Sony letting so many games that could be on the Vita not be? Like *God Of War: Ascension*. Or more realistically, some of the great PSN games like

The Unfinished Swan or *Journey*? I know they are starting to get a lot of the PSN Games to the Vita in 2013. Which is great. Also I hear *Fez* is going multi-platform. Bringing that to Vita would surely sell some consoles? I would buy the PSN games if they were on Vita as its nice to have them on the go.

Sir Thorne

The Vita has had a troubled start, and the relatively small amount of games for the system hasn't helped. But the longer that Vita survives, the more people will realise what a great little machine it is. We're sure that in the future we'll see some great indie games developed exclusively to make use of all the Vita's rad features. The future is bright!

☛ *Journey* would be lovely on Vita, if it could happen.



WIN ANARCHY REIGNS ON PS3!

Thanks to our good friends at Sega, we've got two copies of *Anarchy Reigns* to give away on PS3. For fans of PlatinumGames, it represents the last title in the the four-game deal struck years ago. You get to play as Bayonetta, too! To be in with a chance of winning this prize, just answer this simple question:

WHICH OF THESE THREE GAMES DEVELOPED BY PLATINUM WASN'T RELEASED ON PS3?

A) Infinite Space B) Bayonetta C) Vanquish

Pop your answer and address in an email to play@imagine-publishing.co.uk with the subject header 'Bit annoying that Bayonetta 2 is only coming out on Wii U'. Also email that address if you need a list of terms and conditions. Over 18s only.





As David Cameron once said, "too many Twits make a Play column." Or something. Erm... Twitter questions!

@HELLO_CAMO Favorite non-Sony console. Go! Of all time or right now? Of all time – probably the SNES. Wonderful machine, countless phenomenal games. Right now? Can't go wrong with an Xbox 360 to balance out the PS3 glory. Twice the fun!

@PJMARTIN1995 Would game sales suffer if people under the age limit could buy them? Surely they would go up, as more people would be buying games? We don't condone this at all of course. Age ratings are there for a reason. Parents – don't buy unsuitable games for your kids!

@STOZA Why don't Crytek put *Timesplitters 4* on kickstarter and let it become a reality? You'll have to ask Crytek.

@NIRVANAFANWICKS Why did *The Simpsons* change the DVD packaging? It horrible now stupid cardboard DVD sleeves. Agreed! The new cardboard designs are just shoddy and bend easily.

@FIANDRAWR Can I has cheezburger? Can I has different Twitter question?

@SHAIKHSIDDIKY Are you guys going to review and rate *Tomb Raider* a flawless 10/10? :D Considering the fact we use a percentage rating scale this is really unlikely. Also, no. Well. It depends how good it is, obviously. That's how scores work.

@BTRDAN Would you rather be attacked by a grizzly bear or a swarm of angry hornets?? Who cares? We'll fight the world! COME FACE ME, BRO, I STAND ALONE.

@TRIGGYWIGGY How much hours you played in *Battlefield*? I'm up to 900 hours. Certainly not that many. Although we've probably lost that many hours to *Battlefield* overall.

@CRYSSLEONHART Where did the sudden explosion of Android consoles come from, did I miss a meeting? You weren't at the meeting?

@ALEXSKINNER95 *The Last Of Us* or *Beyond*? Why do we have to choose? Both!

@PSN_SUCK69 Will I win the lottery? Absolutely. (Probably not.) When you do, can we have a bit?

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Cover image

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13-Issue subscription UK £51.90 / Europe £70 / ROW £80

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Printed by Wyndeham Heron, The Bental Complex, Colchester Road, Heybridge, Maldon, Essex CM9 4NW
Distributed in the UK and Eire by Seymour Distribution, 2 East Poultry Avenue, London, EC1A 9PT

☎ 0207 429 4000

Distributed in Australia by Gordon and Gotch, Equinox Centre,

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Distributed in the Rest of the World by Marketforce, Blue Fin

Building, 110 Southwark Street, London, SE1 0SU

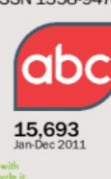
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ISSN 1358-9474



15,693
Jan-Dec 2011

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THE LAST OF US DEMO

The *Last Of Us* will be playable for the first time when a demo ships with *God Of War: Ascension* in March. While it's not been confirmed if non-buyers will end up getting to sample the game themselves, it's nonetheless exciting

Not bad if you were going to buy *God Of War* anyway. Buy one PlayStation 3 exclusive, sample another for free – not bad at all! As explained on the PlayStation blog, all you will need is your *God Of War: Ascension* disc, which includes details on how you can access the demo for free as soon as it is released. Capcom did something like this with *Dragon's Dogma* and *Resident Evil 6* on 360 last year, and of course, we recently saw it with the *Zone Of The Enders HD Collection* as well, which shipped with a rather sexy demo of *Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance*. It's a good move for all involved, really, and *The Last Of Us* really is the game of the moment on PS3.

This is a sly move on Sony's part. Everyone is looking forward to *The Last Of Us* (everyone!) while *God Of War: Ascension*, while likely to sell well, probably has fewer fans than literally everyone. Remember when Konami included a demo for *Metal Gear Solid 2* with the then-unknown *Zone Of The Enders*? It sold pretty well as a result, and the same is likely to be true here. Clever Sony, you sly dogs. We just hope a demo for *the rest of us* (hahahahaha) becomes available at some point as well.



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PREVIEWS

The games that will shape the future of PlayStation

Dead Island was easily
Techland's biggest ever hit.





RELEASE DATE: 26 APRIL

It's certainly a nice-looking place for a slaughter.

Dead Island: Riptide

Full sequel or glorified add-on pack? Techland talks us through its zombie island return...

PS3

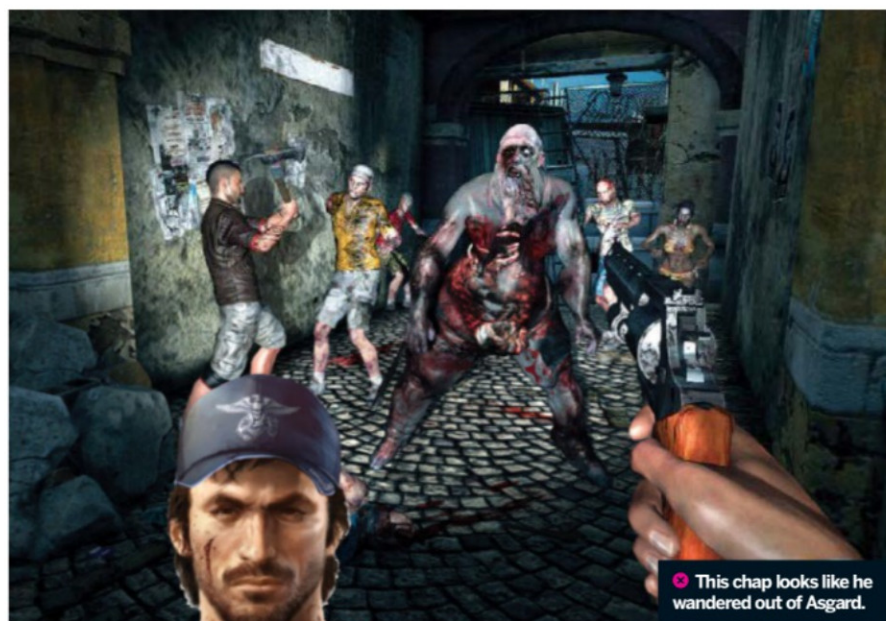
If *Dead Island: Riptide* is a sequel, why isn't it called *Dead Island 2* in this age of SEO-friendly internet nonsense? "It's the next instalment in the series," clarifies *Deep Silver* creative producer Sebastian Reichert. "Fans made clear that they want to have more of *Dead Island* and we also had a lot more ideas to add to the format. When the developer and fans want the same thing, we can deliver something great!"

So, it's not *Dead Island 2*, but it is a sequel being released a year and a half after the original – which implies the actual *Dead Island 2* threatens to be something much more ambitious. With *Riptide*, though, Techland is using this opportunity to address fan complaints about the original game, which was an undeniably interesting experience, despite its overall lack of mechanical polish. "Tons of stuff has been addressed," says Reichert. "People were unhappy with the firearms so

we improved everything about them. Of course, we'll stay focused on close combat but when you use a gun in the game now, it'll pack a wallop compared to the first game.

"The interface was criticised indirectly so we did a lot there: how the minimap works, how the game communicates that items are too old, mission guidance, etc. Close combat has been further improved, skill trees have been expanded and, of course, a high priority has been to get rid of the bugs." *Dead Island* was considered part of the generation of releases that just ship with a ton of bugs to be patched out later – a bit annoying, so it's pleasing to know that one of *Riptide*'s priorities is to sort this out. Nobody wants a half-finished game on day one, and maybe this will help the follow-up garner further critical acclaim.

"Taking place just after the original game with the same range of characters, plus a couple of new >



This chap looks like he wandered out of Asgard.

IMPORTING YOUR CHARACTER

What carries over into *Dead Island: Riptide* from your original save?

"THE WHOLE CHARACTER will be imported, we remove the equipment in the process, but all skills and XP will stay intact," Reichert explains when we ask about importing saves into *Riptide*. "Thanks to the unique balancing system in *Dead Island* the game will simply adjust to your character and you can enjoy a new island with the character you built up during the first game." Nice to have a series that tallies your progress, then – we wonder if they'll also carry over into the inevitable *Dead Island 2*?



PREVIEW



Looks like players won't be short of tactical options.

>additions, the new island sounds like a more geographically varied backdrop for players, headlined by the inclusion of water-strewn locales. "Water is an essential new element to the game! Exploring a flooded jungle with the boat is a great new experience that is now available in *Dead Island: Riptide*. A huge area within a flooded jungle is available to scout," explains Reichert. Bodes well for jumpy moments with zombies popping up out of rivers, we suppose – or not so much, if you're the scared type.

"We also wanted to make sure that the city on the island is much better in terms of contrast. The city in *Dead Island* was already ugly before the creatures appeared. The new city is just beautiful and offers very interesting architecture." Improved art direction, then, and an environment that offers a departure from what came before.

In terms of the story, there's a gameplay-based logic to why Deep Silver and Techland opted to make it a direct continuation. "That seemed most logical as we wanted to continue the experience. You will be able to import your character from *Dead Island*. So simply take your old character and experience how the story continues – you don't have to finish the game or reach a certain level. Just continue your experience! Of course, it is also possible to start a new character."

As you've probably seen, *Dead Island: Riptide* came packaged with

its own slightly lame announcement trailer – in the spirit of the original's internet-dominating tale of a zombie child's transformation (but ultimately not representative of the vibe of the game or our experiences), there's another slightly less 'powerful' one with a couple blowing up their boat in the face of relentless zombie hordes. If *Tree Of Life* director Terence Malick made bad zombie movies, it's the sort of thing he'd come up with.

We ask to what extent this marketing is viewed as a separate entity to the development of *Dead Island* titles. "They show off user stories, but not the actual story of the game," is Reichert's short reply. Like it or not (and we don't really like it), these trailers are now part of *Dead Island*'s DNA, and we're sure they'll get more tenuous as the series rolls on.

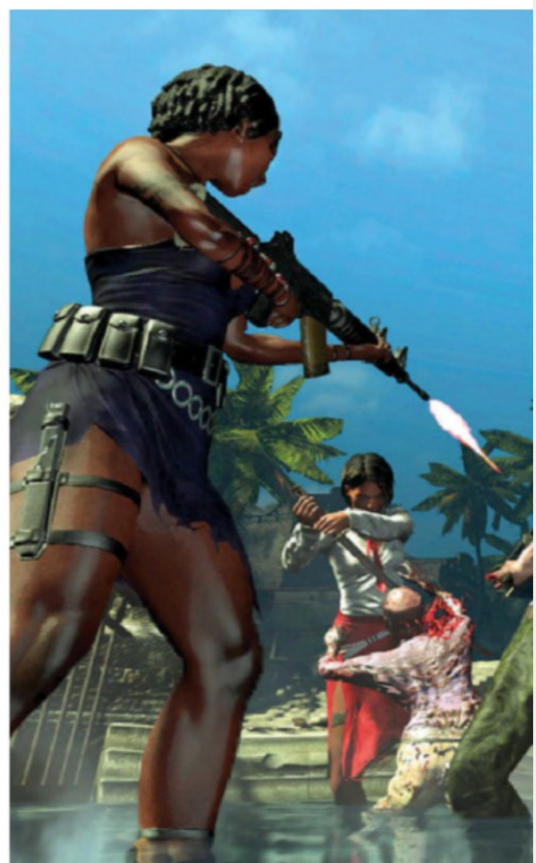
Back to *Riptide*, though. The inclusion of new character John Morgan, who offers a slightly different combat vibe to the existing avatars, has an amusingly specific point of inspiration: a *Dead Island* mod on the internet. "John is our answer to a tribute video. Check out 'Fist of the Dead Star' on YouTube," advises Reichert. "We love Hokuto No Ken (Fist of the North Star) and when developing the game we always asked ourselves how we could implement fist fighting into the game to make it more than a just 'last resort' action. This video gave us some great ideas. John is of course

not as extreme as Kenshiro, but he is our martial arts expert. And we have a lot of goodies in there to make sure you can enjoy his skills."

In many ways, *Riptide* is a reaction to the way players engaged with the original *Dead Island*, as Reichert recalls. "What we learned is: give players a playground. Don't force them into a story. Let them tell their own stories. With *Riptide* we are already looking forward to hear from players how many insane ideas they had to get rid of the zombie plague!"

Right now, we're getting a bit of a *Dragon Age: Awakening*-style vibe from *Dead Island: Riptide* – no bad thing to be compared to one of the best and most-full-featured add-on packs released on PS3, but nonetheless, this looks like incremental progress from the original rather than a glimpse at what typically comes next with a big sequel. Nonetheless, we're intrigued, as those who persevered with *Dead Island* found it to be a rewarding co-op experience that, at times, felt like a smart interpretation of what it might actually be like to survive in a zombie apocalypse, with a certain in-game logic to the quest system that we'd like to see replicated in *Riptide*. Whether this turns out to be a semi-sequel or an actual follow-up, *Dead Island* is a series with serious room to grow.

Read the official stuff about **Dead Island: Riptide** here, if you so fancy: deadisland.deepsilver.com



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Sorts out the original's glitches and gameplay issues, apparently
- All-new environment, and the water should mix it up a bit
- New characters with different skills
- Import your save game and reap the benefits of keeping your experience points

READ ME

Dead Island: Riptide is the oddly subtitled sequel to 2011's mega-selling *Dead Island*, and is out in a couple of months.



• The undead once again match their surroundings.

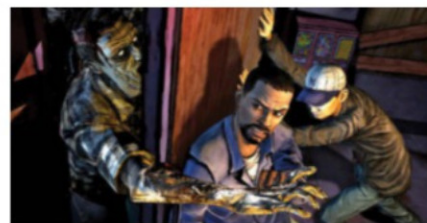


ZOMBIE GENERATION

PS3's five most important zombie games

THE WALKING DEAD

1 The new king, just because the zombies in it aren't actually the point – they're just a backdrop to human drama. This is probably the first zombie game released on any PlayStation format that isn't just about killing them, though that's obviously part of it. Buy the complete series now if you haven't already.



DEAD ISLAND

2 Like it or not, the trailer for *Dead Island* guaranteed it a big audience from day one, because people are easily confused by smart marketing – nevertheless, *Dead Island* was a very good mixture of *Borderlands*-style gameplay and survival horror that could easily be excellent if its ideas are developed this time around.



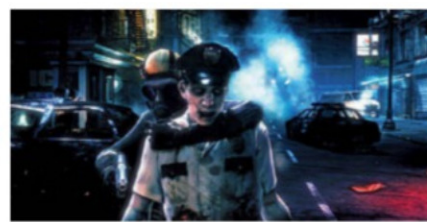
DEAD NATION

3 Sophisticated twin-stick zombie slaying from Housemarque that most of you probably own, thanks to the free PSN giveaway following the hacking saga in 2011. We love it, since, rather than just plonking players in random levels, it has a terrific sense of progression throughout its undead-infested world.



RESIDENT EVIL 5

4 Are they zombies anymore in *Resident Evil*? Well, yeah, in all but name. They may not wander slowly towards you in *Dawn Of The Dead*-esque fashion, but they still feed on the flesh of the living. *Resi 5* is a terrific co-op experience and a very good single-player game, too.



BORDERLANDS: THE ZOMBIE ISLAND OF DR. NED

5 We enjoyed this good value DLC pack, since it applied zombies to *Borderlands* and somehow made it work wonderfully well – £8 for one of the best zombie-based experiences on PS3. That's ruddy good in our book.



❖ If this is what swims near the top of the ocean, what waits at the bottom?



RELEASE DATE: Q2 2013

Grand Theft Auto V

Sharks, submarines and dogs riding shotgun



So, add submarines to Rockstar's *Grand Theft Auto* series for the first time ever – the new screens confirm that we'll be going underwater in a vehicle to explore the vast ocean floor in the upcoming *GTA V*, a thrilling proposition for anyone who floated on the shiny waters of Liberty City in *GTA IV* yet longed to see what was going on beneath.

More important things to note: sharks and for the first time, passenger jets. Main character Trevor can be seen piloting one alongside a chap in a military jet, implying that

some of the heists we'll be seeing might go airborne, a la *San Andreas*. The last thing we need to mention is the sight of a gigantic shark, implying that wildlife will play as prominent a role in *GTA V* as it did in *Red Dead Redemption*, which we're very much looking forward to interacting with. And by that, we mean shooting at it. All of it absolutely convinces us we're looking at one of the generation's best games in the making. Also, DOG SAT IN A CAR.

GTA V will be released in Spring. Rockstar's version of Spring is usually May. Go here for more info: www.rockstargames.com/v.

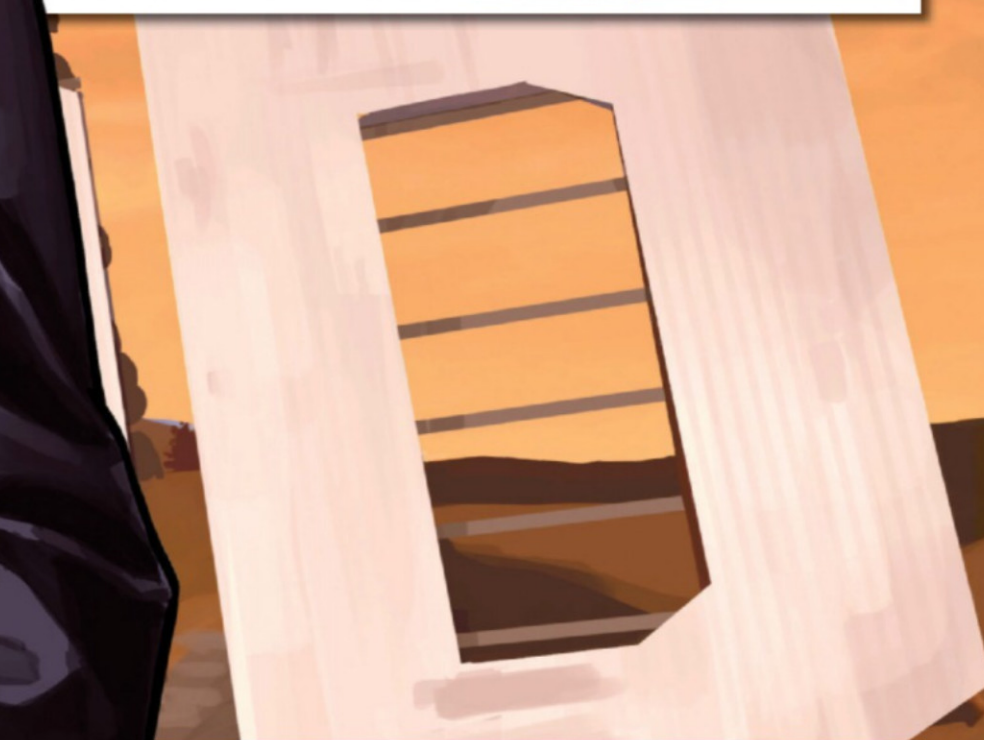
WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- ❖ Animals everywhere, although we're not expecting to see bears this time
- ❖ Rockstar's biggest open world ever, EVER
- ❖ Hop in a tiny submarine and explore the ocean
- ❖ EVER!

IT'S SO BIG!



Rockstar always does the best sunsets. England never looks this nice, does it?



We can't wait to cart our arses around in one of these little underwater things.

READ ME

Grand Theft Auto V is the latest in the moderately successful series from Rockstar Games. Call it a cult hit, if you will [sarcasm].



GTA EVOLVES

How the addition of animals changes GTA forever

THE PRESENCE OF wildlife and random events were two of the most distinguishing features of *Red Dead* – bringing them to *GTA* will transform the series into something else entirely, expanding the scope of the franchise beyond people and skyscrapers and taking it into the wider world. Whatever *GTA* title comes after, we'd be very surprised if we saw it set specifically in a city. It seems there's far more Rockstar can achieve by taking the game into other environments.



RELEASE DATE: MARCH

God Of War: Ascension

Hands-on with the multiplayer beta



It's probably even more boring to complain about shoe-horned multiplayer modes in classically single-player games than it is for developers to keep including them, so we won't. And it was with this attitude that we pulled up our dusty boots, ripped off our shirts and dived – roaring, naturally – into the *God Of War: Ascension* beta.

Immediately, it doesn't feel tacked on. Why? Primarily, because it's not a shooter. This is a world that hasn't been beaten to death and lorded over by two or three unbeatable masters. The world of online brawling has barely been tackled this generation, and so *God Of War: Ascension* feels kind of fresh.

The beta itself offers three game modes – a free-for-all four-player ruck called Favour Of The Gods, an eight-player melee known as Team Favour Of The Gods (a stupid name if there ever was one) and the altogether less flashily monikered Capture The Flag.

Before any of that, though, is a brief but tasty tutorial. You choose your allegiance (class, basically) by stepping up to the statue of one of four gods of Olympus, and the whole scene is

played out with that familiar and always amusing *God Of War* pomp. You can pick from Ares, Hermes, Zeus and Poseidon, but we kept it as real as can be and plumped for the old war god himself, Ares. This meant our champion – the bald, steroid-swamped rage-man that he is – is best suited to aggressive melee combat.

Good job too, as the tutorial then asks you to do rather a lot of that. Thankfully, if you've played *God Of War* before, you know what to do. Light and heavy attacks, a launcher when you hold triangle, and a nasty chain to pull your idiot opponent back towards you. Circle delivers a boot of justice (great for punting someone into a wall of spikes) and L1 is the always-trusty block button. *God Of War's* combat has always been parry-heavy, and the multiplayer maintains that flow, but does so by altering the input. Instead of just timing a block, you now have to hit X at the same time. This then pops a brief bubble or shield around your character, and any hit will bounce off it. If it sounds like the system has been oversimplified, don't worry. It's just a case of clever compensation for latency.

Not that we saw any of that. The flow of the action in Favour Of The Gods is frantic and furious, but surprisingly well-measured. Mashing buttons won't work; you need to time your combos, wait for your opponents to overreach themselves and mess up, and of course deal out the type of Ancient Greek justice that'll turn the Aegean red.

Smashing down an enemy's health bar puts them in a stunned state, and you can finish them in typically gory style by plunging your sword through their chest or tearing off their head. The violence in *God Of War* has always felt thematically appropriate, and the gladiatorial nature of this multiplayer only cements that. Yes, it's gratuitous, but that's the point.

The main attraction is Team Favour Of The Gods, which features two groups of four battling over territories, Domination style – while a giant Cyclops smashes the back of the map. There are plenty of ways to win, be it from simply holding as many capture points as possible to the massive haul of points you receive if you can actually kill the Cyclops with the randomly-dropped Spear Of Olympus.

There's so much going on that there's plenty of scope for unscripted drama – always the meat of good multiplayer – and it's clearly a well designed mode, but at the moment it's very easy for your character to get lost in the carnage. Hopefully Sony Santa Monica will figure out a way of improving the highlighting on your own avatar, or perhaps moving his own health bar to the top of the screen so you always know when you're in danger. Easy fixes.

Finishing off the Beta is Capture The Flag, which despite its tried and tested roots still manages to bring some *God Of War* power and flavour to its action. Everyone knows what to do, of course, but the button-mashing minigame to yank the flag from its home is gratifyingly muscular, and again the whole thing's overseen by a scenery-smashing Cyclops.

So, does *God Of War: Ascension* actually 'need' this multiplayer aspect? Well perhaps not, but it's also good to remember that multiplayer doesn't need to be a 12-month investment of hundreds of hours. This gratuitously gory modernised version of *Power Stone* is already cracking fun, and even if the final thing only makes for a fun couple of weeks, who cares? Just enjoy it.

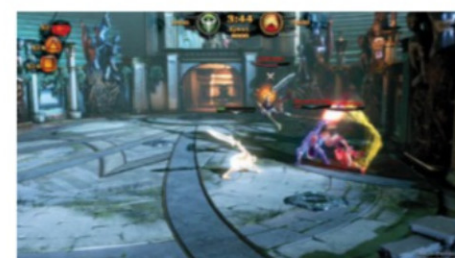
God Of War: Ascension is being developed by Sony Santa Monica. Check the website for more details www.playstation.us.com

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Fast, aggressive combat
- Nicely different to the norm
- Classically punchy and stupidly violent
- Lag-free, despite lots going on

READ ME

This is the fourth 'big' *God Of War* game, but there have also been a couple of highly enjoyable PSP outings for Mr. Kratos. It's a series with plenty left in the tank.



CUSTOMISING YOUR CHAMPION

It's not just about mashing buttons...

AS IS FAST becoming the norm, *God Of War: Ascension* features full loadout options for your champion, and a series of unlocks designed to keep you hooked into the gameplay loop. After selecting your allegiance, be it to Ares, Hermes, Poseidon or Zeus, you can then start tinkering around with your weapon of choice, your armour, your magic and even your chosen abilities.

Our champion was a devout Ares supporter, and was able to unlock a devastating hammer when he hit level 5. Along with standard XP unlocks, you can actually find treasure in matches, so it's worth keeping an eye on the respawning chests. If one is silver, it'll contain loot, which is then a permanent fixture in your character's loadout options. The best stuff, though, is naturally kept for those who are dedicated to the grind.

PREVIEW

CRYSTAL D TALKS MULTIPLAYER

Joe Khoury, producer of Tomb Raider
WAS MULTIPLAYER ALWAYS PART OF THE REBOOT PLAN?

Multiplayer was always part of the reboot process. I think what was important to us and I guess what we really wanted to do is allow players to communicate experiences to each other that are not available in single-player. So you could talk about the moment Lara had to climb this cliff to reach this objective in single-player. But with multiplayer they can say 'Oh do you remember when we set this trap and we were one point away from winning and all of a sudden this event happens.' They're moments players create when playing multiplayer that are just randomised and depending on who you're playing with and how close the match is, they create an entirely different experience.

HOW DOES THE PERK SYSTEM WORK?

There are two upgrade paths. There's the XP system and then there's salvage, which is the monetary value of the game. You get XP from setting traps, doing things the right way and being creative, which allows you to unlock characters and weapon loadout slots. You can get up to five weapon loadout slots that allow you to equip two variations of a weapon. There are also upgrades that effect your weapons, which you get from salvage. So say you're a shotgun guy and you've upgraded your shotgun to reload quicker, you can also equip yourself with a defensive skill that protects you against explosions or against bow attacks.

AND HOW MANY 'GAME CHANGERS' ARE THERE?

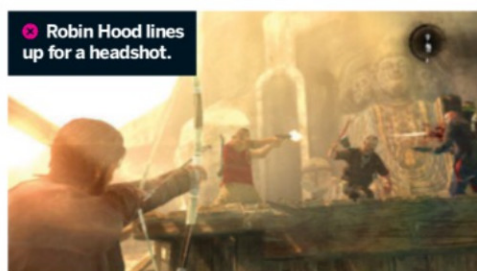
There's one per map, so five. There's one big one and there's traps and stuff like that scattered around the map. It's all part of the exploration and we really want the player to go and figure them out.

WHAT ABOUT FUTURE TOMB RAIDER GAMES AND MULTIPLAYER MODES?

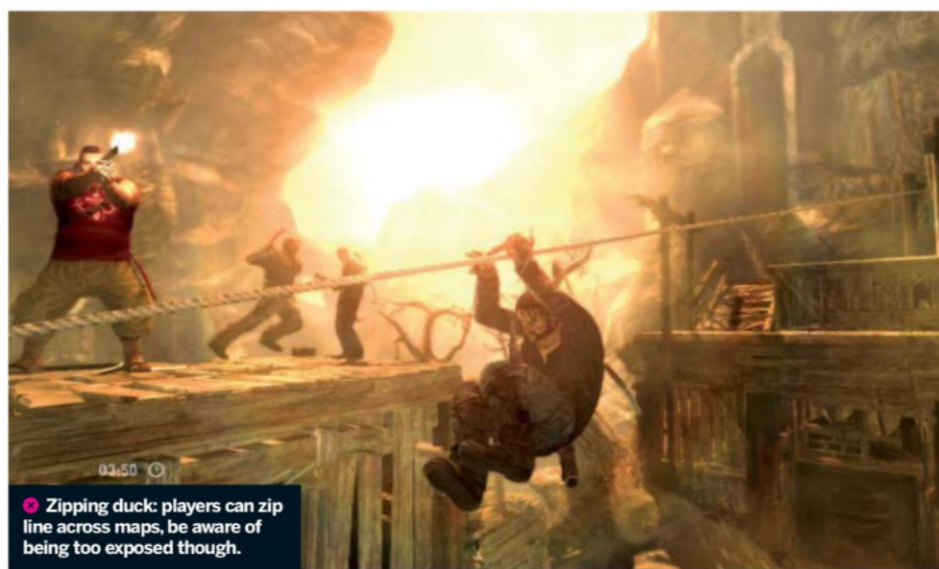
There's DLC; we haven't announced anything on it yet, but watch this space.



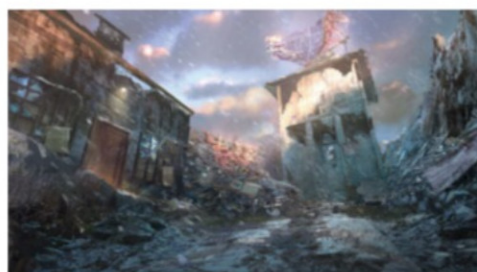
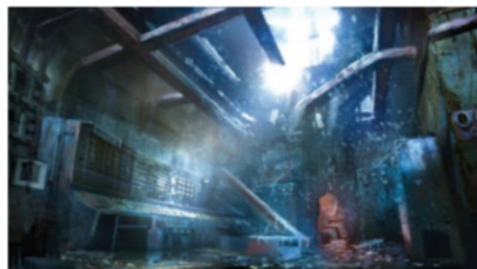
✪ Tomb Raider's platforming bits aren't overly simplified.



✪ Robin Hood lines up for a headshot.



✪ Zipping duck: players can zip line across maps, be aware of being too exposed though.



A LARA LAUGHS?



RELEASE DATE: 5 MARCH 2013

❗ This is about to turn rather nasty, isn't it?

Tomb Raider

Online multiplayer for Ms. Croft

PS3

"Multiplayer was always part of the reboot process," Joe Khoury, *Tomb Raider* producer, says with a straight face. Maybe we're just cynics, maybe Joe is serious, maybe Batman jumped out of the Batwing before the bomb went off. Nothing's clear anymore. *Fifa*, *Fight Night*, *Call Of Duty*, *Need For Speed* and many others have separate online functions that you need a pass to gain access to. And if you're playing a second-hand version, you have to purchase that story separately, it's a way of protecting the profit margin in a sector with a fervent resell market and it makes good business sense. But it's just that: business. You can't help but feel that this 'business' end of the game is a last minute tack-on. And when you look at the multiplayer through that lens, it looks a bit, well, cynical.

We played two multiplayer modes, Team Death Match and Rescue. Team Death Match sees the survivors of Lara's crashed ship pitted against the Solarii in teams of four, with the first team to reach 25 kills taking the victory. Rescue is a capture the flag type mode where the survivors have to collect medical supplies around a

map and return them to their base, whilst fighting off an onslaught from the Solarii. Players can choose to play for either the Solarii or the survivors, with both teams having the option to change and upgrade loadouts.

There's also a perk system that includes offensive and defensive abilities to help you through levels, such as bigger clips or extra firepower for your weapon. There are some interesting features worth noting like the crossbow from the single-player, which, in multiplayer, works like a sniper rifle (if you can get the aim right). All of Lara's free running and climbing abilities are available to all characters in multiplayer too and most of the surfaces are scalable, so if you're in a bit of a pickle you'll find an escape route nearby.

There is also something called a 'game changer', which is an in-game perk that you can pick up to change the course of a game. They're usually specific for to the map: we were playing the Sandstorm map and the game changer triggered a sandstorm. The sandstorm simultaneously takes away your enemies radar and gives you their position. These are only available

in-game so there's that extra little bit of uncertainty as to how the game might unfold.

On paper the concepts are fine. It's all standard multiplayer stuff. But, for some reason, in practice, there seems to be some desperately needed fine tuning. Just like *Uncharted*, the aiming leaves a little to be desired for – a common problem for third-person shooters. Helpfully though, there were some strategically placed explosive barrels dotted around the maps, which became almost imperative in your efforts to finish off an enemy.

Similarly, the standing melee attack is not easy to execute; running towards an enemy and managing to accurately strike them takes some practice. What you'll find is that your pick axe will swoosh past their head by about a meter, as will theirs, and you'll both be exuberantly flailing these lethal weapons around in what looks like a camp acid-trip rain-dance.

Even if multiplayer was always part of the *Tomb Raider* reboot plan, it's an entirely different game. Joe spoke about blending the multiplayer with the single-player so the gamer could utilise the skills they learnt from surviving

with Lara and apply them in a Team Death Match scenario. But that's an unrealistic prospect. The single-player rewards stealth, ingenuity and cunning – basic survival traits. The multiplayer is much more frenzied, the maps we played were quite small and camping-out wasn't an option. In fact, camping is actively discouraged because you have to come out of cover to finish your opponent off with a melee attack. It's an entirely different experience. Also, there isn't any crossover between the single-player and multiplayer, no upgrades or pick-ups can be transferred over as they can be in other games like the forthcoming *Aliens: Colonial Marines*.

If you come out of the single-player game expecting to recreate the same experience in multiplayer, you're not going to get it. The multiplayer too, isn't ground breaking. It's entertaining, but not exactly mind-blowing. If you took away the names and faces you'd have a template for any multiplayer third-person shooter in the last few years. And that's the rub; it is largely inoffensive. It has all of the modes you'd expect and some snazzy new features that work within the *Tomb Raider* universe. In parts, it's very enjoyable. But most of us don't want to fork out 40 quid for what could just be a supplementary experience.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- ❑ In-game perks like 'game changers' make the result refreshingly uncertain
- ❑ Traps throughout the maps make for a perilous experience

- ❑ You could spend hours customising your loadouts, only to realise it's impossible to actually fire your weapon
- ❑ Trying to melee someone to death is more frustrating than trying to attack them with mayonnaise

READ ME

The multiplayer for *Tomb Raider* wasn't developed by Crystal Dynamics, but Canadian outfit Eidos Montreal.

Tomb Raider multiplayer is being developed by Eidos Montreal, for more information go www.tombraider.com

PREVIEW



RELEASE DATE: 2013

The Walking Dead: Survival Instinct

Not to be confused with Telltale's series



The Walking Dead is big money these days. The initial comic series has spun off into a mega successful TV show and the fantastic game series from Telltale that many pegged as the best game of last year. Now, lo and behold, here comes *The Walking Dead: Survival Instinct*, the almost inevitable first-person shooter take on the franchise.

Telltale's *The Walking Dead* series was based in the world of the original comics, but *Survival Instinct* is an FPS that takes place before the start of the TV show. Players control fan favourite and certified badass Daryl Dixon, as he and brother Merle fight their way through the Georgia countryside and try to maintain the instinct... to SURVIVE. *Survival Instinct* is being developed by Terminal Reality, creators of such hits as, erm, *Kinect Star Wars*, and, uh, *BloodRayne*. But hey, new year, new start, new game!

Early alpha footage shows Daryl stalking through desolate towns with a variety of melee weapons, stealthily avoiding zombies when possible and taking them down up close if he has to. The action seems in keeping with the show, where bullets are scarce and gunshots attract zombies. Close

combat is the order of the day, the footage showing swift executions with a knife to a zombified face. Daryl's signature crossbow has already made an appearance in early screenshots, to the delight of fans. We wait with baited breath to see if you can yank a used arrow out of an ex-zombie's skull like in the show. Make it happen, Terminal Reality!

From what we've seen, *Survival Instinct* will reward a slower pace and a more cerebral approach. Walkers will track the player with sight, sound and smell (not taste?), and once Daryl is discovered, it isn't long before a horde of hungry dead guys show up on his doorstep. Stealth seems to be the main course of this particular spread, but we will eat our hats if some high-octane blasting sections don't make an appearance too. Have to appeal to the *Call Of Duty* crowd, after all.

Norman Reedus and Michael Rooker, Daryl and Merle respectively, are confirmed to be reprising their roles, but only time will tell if it's the good type of celebrity voice acting or the bad, "I'm really bored and only doing this because I'm contractually obliged to" kind.

Other characters from the TV show seem unlikely, but the brothers redneck will encounter various persons in their

journey to the "safe-haven" of Atlanta. How much these social interactions will shape the game remains to be seen, but it seems unlikely *Survival Instinct* will be as open-ended as its Telltale-developed cousin. After all, here we know what happens once the game ends.

The two very different *Walking Dead* games highlight the differences between triple-A spin-offs and smaller, indie studios. *Survival Instinct* is being made to appeal to as many people as possible, ticking boxes as design rolls along. It all looks well-made, but a bit clinical and uninspired, the sort of thing you would typically expect from a licensed videogame. Telltale's series was an adventure game, in 2012! It had frame-rate issues and bugs up the wazoo, but we loved it because it told a phenomenal story. And, of course, Clementine.

The Walking Dead: Survival Instinct has the potential to be a vital part of the larger *Walking Dead* canon. Tense first-person zombie-dodging has already been proven to work in *DayZ*, and if it can make the player feel as awesome as Daryl Dixon is, we could have a winner on our hands.

The Walking Dead: Survival Instinct is being developed by Terminal Reality. Check the website for more details: thewalkingdeadbegins.com



Norman Reedus and Michael Rooker are both confirmed to reprise their TV roles.



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- You play as Daryl Dixon. Man's an awesome bastard, you get me?
- Stealthily taking out walkers promises gory fun
- Published by Activision, so should have lots of money behind it
- Zombies are still kind of cool, we suppose?

READ ME

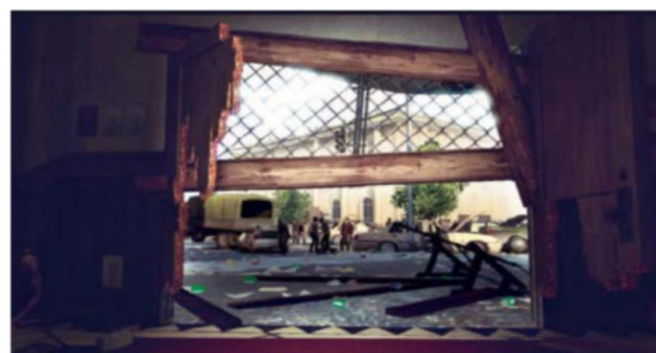
The world's first Daryl Dixon simulator is shaping up to be a high-tension trek through zombie-infested Georgia, with plenty of crossbow-to-face action.

Z-Z-Z-ZOMBIES!



❖ Silly zombies, look what happens when you try to drive a train.

❖ *Survival Instinct* prioritises sneaking over shooting.



ARROWS > BULLETS

Move aside, Hawkeye

CROSSBOWS ARE COOL, but no one in recent memory has handled one quite like Daryl "arrow through the eye" Dixon. Early screenshots have shown that the signature weapon is in the game, but aside from that it's all speculation. Will it have realistic arrow physics? Will it feature a variety of upgradable scopes? Will it scream "HEADSHOT" in the *Quake* voice when you tag a walker in the mush? We can only hope.



🔴 Vroom! Screech! See, we know racing better than ANYONE.

RELEASE DATE: SUMMER 2013

GRID 2

PS3's underrated racing hero returns! Codemasters talks us through it



🔴 GRID 2 is certainly multi-faceted compared to its rivals.



🔴 Shiny! The original GRID was one of the best-looking racers on PS3.

THE FUTURE OF RACING

Codemasters offers a glimpse into where racing's going next

WHILE NOT GOING into specifics, Codemasters is debuting an initiative called RaceNet where players can tally their stats online through their phones at any time. Moody describes how this is part of the company's attempt to adapt to the changing nature of the racing genre. "It's difficult to ignore the ubiquity of web access and mobile gaming through the likes of smart phones and tablets, so it is important that console games embrace these as means to enhance the experience. For us, this is not just about stats viewing but letting players meaningfully continue their experience and plot their next career moves for both their online and offline careers. Again, stay tuned to hear more details of how RaceNet helps us support this."

PS3 Codemasters might be most synonymous with *DiRT* and *Formula 1* when we reflect on this generation's racing output, but 2008's *Race Driver: GRID* was undoubtedly its most experimental entry in the genre, a pretty varied racer that pioneered an influential rewind mechanic before lying dormant for many years.

"*GRID 2* is a tarmac-based racer that immerses the player into a world where Street, Road and Circuit racing are all brought together into a unified series," says executive producer Clive Moody, describing how the game fits into the context of Codemasters' other racing titles. "As well as reflecting human and technical precision, *GRID 2* captures the diversity, rivalries, the emotion and drama of competitive motorsport, and the journey to driving superstardom."

We ask Moody how feedback from the original *GRID* informed the sequel this many years down the line – it turns out a lot of the sequel's focus comes down to you personalising your racing experience. "We always carefully consider feedback from all of our titles. The original *GRID* experience still stands

up today and it was paramount that we didn't break what was already great. With that as a starting point we set out to create a rewarding game with additional depth and longevity."

Moody continues. "One element of this is through an evolving world where your successes as a driver are reflected back into your experience. A growing roster of race-tuned cars to compete in, garage facilities that grow with you, new rivalries as you compete in bigger and more prestigious events, all the rewards that come with being a racing superstar."

Possibly the most interesting addition to *GRID 2* is LiveRoutes, which alters the race while it's playing out, inspired somewhat by the growing spate of dynamic racing games that change on the fly, like *Split/Second* or *Ridge Racer Unbounded*. "LiveRoutes is *GRID 2*'s method of keeping the player on their toes. At its heart, it's a dynamic track system that seamlessly modifies the player's route through our city tracks whilst they race. Players will be able to turn this option on in custom races in single player and online in order for them to maximise their challenge."

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- 🔴 More forward-thinking driving mechanics to stir things up
- 🔴 Revamped handling model to ensure attention to detail

- 🔴 Looks beautiful on what's supposed to be old hardware
- 🔴 Codemasters almost always gets this genre right



Whilst it's always fun to keep trimming your lap time and aiming to set the best time for a track that you know back to front, we really liked the idea of having to think – and react – on your feet. So with LiveRoutes, a corner won't ever just be presented in the same sequence; instead you'll have to tweak your approach, racing line, braking point and exit on every corner as they unfold in front of you. We were inspired a little by open world games – we really liked the variation they provide – but with this system we've managed to keep a sharp focus and goal for the player unlike open-world titles."

Tailoring the cars and respecting that part of the experience has been vital for Codies, too. "We've branded the handling system TrueFeel, which is really more of a process through which we aim to create accurate portrayals of what each car's essence and character is. This included obtaining hugely detailed specs and data direct from the manufacturers and feeding them into our handling and physics systems. But more than that, we then cross-reference the stats and hard data with the experiences of drivers who've actually had their hands on these cars for real. There really is no substitute for this kind of feedback when creating an authentic

experience. I wouldn't say this is a radical departure from the handling systems of the past, but instead these things go together to heighten the effectiveness of a lot of the same values we've always maintained."

At this point in the generation, we're always curious to hear if developers are hitting the limits when it comes to the PS3's capabilities, but Moody seems confident that there's a lot more to get out of the system. "Whilst the prospect of a new generation of console hardware is genuinely exciting, the current generation technology keeps on giving. We continue to push boundaries and set the benchmark for vehicle damage, with our new carbon fibre damage modelling looking spectacular. From a visual standpoint the game extends far beyond anything we have previously achieved. A big part of this is down to an entirely new lighting system. Light, shade and light bounce is now much more realistically calculated, meaning cars and tracks sit together in the scene perfectly. Take a look at our night tracks to really see this shown off. These are techniques you expect to see on high-end PC games, but rarely on console."

A high-end racing title to see out the generation, then, and perhaps even a glimpse at the sort of dynamic, forward-thinking driving games we can expect from the next generation of PlayStation hardware. Codemasters knows this genre inside and out – *GRID 2* is unlikely to be the first move away from that.

Uncover some more official *GRID 2* stuff at www.gridgame.com, if you fancy it. Or don't. It's entirely up to you.



✶ *GRID 2* represents Codies' most progressive racing franchise.



✶ We wouldn't have the word Fatlace on the side of our car.



✶ The lighting effects in *GRID 2* are certainly a cut above.

READ ME

GRID 2 has a vague release date of Summer 2013. Something to help combat the usual drought, we suppose...

THE BIG PS4 PREDICTION LIST

WITH JUST MONTHS TO GO UNTIL THE PS4 IS OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCED (PROBABLY), HERE'S OUR ROUND-UP OF EDUCATED NEXT-GEN GUESSES...

GAMES DEFINITELY COMING TO PS4 (PROBABLY)

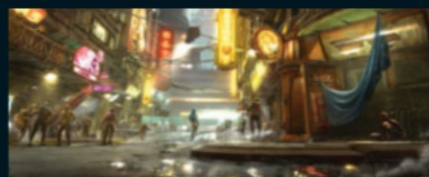
Of everything that's been announced or revealed, these are the games we're near-certain are coming to PS4...



DRAGON AGE III: INQUISITION

First next-gen RPG? ☐

MORE FANTASY ROLE-playing from the master of the genre, BioWare. Said to be more influenced by open-world games like *Skyrim*, *Dragon Age III* is shaping up to be a refined and improved version of a series that was already pretty refined and improved. BioWare know how to make a game look good, so we are hoping it can work their magic with the new generation. As long as you can get freaky with elves and dwarves again, we're in.



STAR WARS 1313

The Sopranos on Coruscant? ☐

THE NEWEST *STAR Wars* game from LucasArts is promising a grittier, more mature take on the universe we all know and (used to) love. Taking place on subterranean level 1313 of city-planet Coruscant, players will control a bounty hunter as they try to uncover a criminal conspiracy. Expect blasters, gadgets and hand-to-hand combat rather than the force and lightsabers. This ain't your Daddy's *Star Wars*.



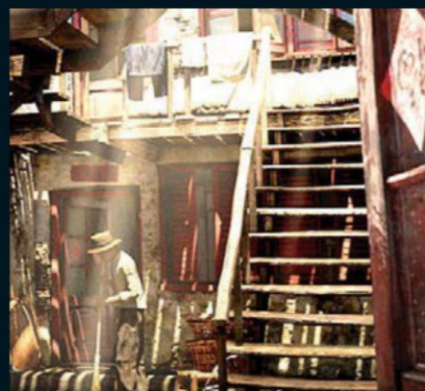
The gritty underground of *Star Wars* planet Coruscant.

We'd estimate that PS4 games have been in development for well over a year, now. Bring on E3 2013...

"1666"

Assassin's Creed in London? ☐

THQ FILED A trademark for "1666" earlier last year, and the mystery game was revealed as a real thing with the company's unfortunate bankruptcy. What we do know is that in charge of 1666 is Patrice Désilets, creator of *Assassin's Creed*. Otherwise, it's all guesswork. 1666 was the year of the Great Fire of London, so could the game revolve around that? Ubisoft recently bought the rights to 1666 and the development studio.



WHORE OF THE ORIENT

Just change the name first ☐

TEAM BONDI HAD a troubled and well-documented existence that, as we all know, didn't end well. *L.A. Noire* was a great game, but its controversial development led to the studio shutting their doors shortly after release. Their next project, "Whore of the Orient", was sold off and is still expected for next-gen consoles. Little is known besides the 1936 Shanghai setting, but if it's as good as *L.A. Noire* then we can't wait.



This is a dead cert for next-gen and PS3 releases.

BATTLEFIELD 4

Rolling the DICE ☐

WE DON'T KNOW a huge amount yet about the next entry in the *Battlefield* series, besides the fact that it's coming and it should be good. Purchasers of the special edition of *Medal of Honor: Warfighter* will have early access to the beta, planned for autumn 2013. The game is expected to run on an updated version of the Frostbite 2 engine, so you can bet it's gonna be really, really pretty.

HOMEFRONT 2

Now created and owned by Crytek... ☐

HOMEFRONT HAD SOME good ideas but was weighed down by a troubled development and its own huge ambition. Kaos Studios is no more and the sequel is being made by Crytek UK, formally known as Free Radical. That's right, them guys what made *Timesplitters*. If that isn't enough to get you excited, you are reading the wrong magazine. It's not expected til 2014 so this one is *definitely* next gen.

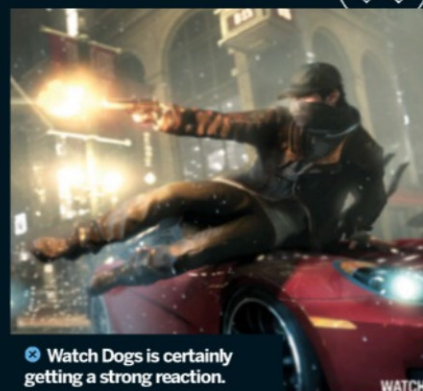
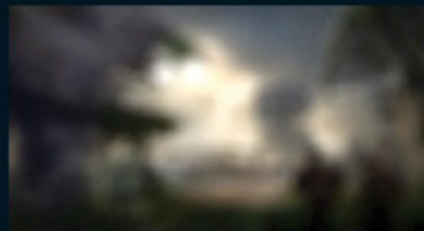


Respawn's FPS has been in development of some kind since Summer 2010. What could they be cooking up over there?

RESPAWN FPS

The COD creators return ☐

RESPAWN ENTERTAINMENT IS the company founded by Jason West and Vince Zampella, who used to be responsible for *Call Of Duty* at Infinity Ward. The fallout between the two and Activision is well-known, and with *Respawn* the two are branching out on their own with a new FPS franchise for EA. We don't know much yet, but hey, a new FPS from the guys who made *Call Of Duty* back when *Call Of Duty* was amazing should be fun.



Watch Dogs is certainly getting a strong reaction.

WATCH DOGS

The next big franchise? ☐

THE SURPRISE HIGHLIGHT of last year's E3, Ubisoft's new IP looks utterly fantastic. The story hits close to home, revolving around a near-future where all electronic devices are connected to each other, all the time. But who controls the supercomputers that really pull the strings? *Watch Dogs* has been confirmed for current consoles, but it looks so freaking nice that it's highly likely to be on next-gen as well.



CYBERPUNK 2077

The Witcher...in space? ☐

CD PROJEKT RED is one of our favourite developers here in the office, thanks to its two *Witcher* titles on PC, and its next project is an open-world RPG based on the classic pen-and-paper RPG, *Cyberpunk 2020*. An RPG as good as *The Witcher* series set in a *Blade Runner*-esque dystopian world is a concept that gets us dripping from untold orifices. It's a long way off, so hopefully a dead cert for PS4.

CERTAIN SEQUELS

These are the inevitable but unannounced follow-ups that we'll be seeing in the early part of the PS4's lifespan – here's what we expect to see from them when they're finally revealed by their publishers...

Assassin's Creed III could be as cool as this screen suggests. Sometimes.



Assassin's Creed III has sold almost ten million copies now. That series ain't going anywhere in the near future.

ASSASSIN'S CREED

Expect a killer return for Ubisoft's flagship franchise

NO WAY WE'VE seen the last of *Assassin's Creed* yet. If Ubisoft can drag three games from the corpse of Ezio then it can at least get one more out of Connor. Rest assured, this game is coming. Hopefully Ubi will tighten up some of the sloppy controls and lack of focus that stopped *ACIII* being quite as good as it could have been. There is still a lot of scope left in the American Revolution setting, especially seeing it all in lovely next-gen graphics.



Will *Call Of Duty* be as big a draw on next-gen platforms?

CALL OF DUTY: MODERN WARFARE 4

Activision takes a Sledgehammer to Call Of Duty

MAYBE WE should amend the saying to three inevitabilities – death, taxes, and a new bloody *Call Of Duty* game every year. *COD* used to be innovative and great, but recent instalments have just been the same old stuff. What better way to reinvigorate a franchise than with a radical new edition on a radical new platform? Apparent story leaks have indicated *Modern Warfare 4* will be the next instalment of the series, so expect more crazy Russians, ridiculous plot twists, and marvellous moustaches. Oh, and plenty of swearing children online.



Rocksteady is advertising jobs for next-gen development on its website. Seems like a new *Batman* is inevitable...

BATMAN

Arkham Universe, Arkham Origins?

ROCKSTEADY'S BATMAN GAMES have redefined what a superhero game can accomplish with their gritty stories, beautiful stealth and smooth, bone-crunching combat. *Arkham City* sold way too well for there not to be a third one and just imagine how lovely it will look on PS4. Hopefully *Batman The Third*, or whatever it's called, will feature the whole extended Bat-family: we'd love to play as Nightwing, Robin and Batgirl at points throughout the story. Just leave any Batmobile driving levels on the drawing board, Rocksteady. We can do without 'em.



Give us an even bigger, more detailed world!

FALLOUT 4

We're booking the time off already

RECENTLY TEASED BY Three-Dogg's voice actor in Twitter, *Fallout 4* is another game that hasn't been announced, but we all know it's coming. Another return to the barren wastelands of post-apocalyptic America sounds like a good time to us, and with the added power of next-gen to boot, *Fallout 4* has the potential to be truly excellent. We want a bigger world, more huge mutants to shoot, more awesome power armour to wear, and the triumphant return of canine companion Dogmeat.



Sony won't let the *Killzone* franchise die any time soon.

KILLZONE 4

Shooting even prettier things

SONY'S PREMIER EXCLUSIVE FPS franchise seems likely to return for the PS4. There's still plenty of scope left in the story for more Helghast-blasting action (Helghasting?) Guerrilla Games has always been great at wringing lovely graphics from the PS3 thanks to its tight relationship with Sony, so a *Killzone* for the next-gen should be something special to behold. Could we see a whole new trilogy over the coming years?



⊗ Expect more silliness like this in *Dead Rising 3*.

DEAD RISING 3

Capcom will dance with the undead again

ANOTHER TITLE EXPECTED to be announced soon, we here at **Play** have a soft spot for *Dead Rising*. Sure, they ain't perfect, but they are great fun, and what more does one need in life than smacking a zombie in the head with a nerf bat? *Dead Rising* was exemplary at the time for the amount of zombies it could show in screen at any one time, so just imagine how much higher the number is going to be this time around. Thousands of zombies on screen at once? It's gonna happen. Time to get the chainsaw-cart!

⊗ *Red Dead* will surely get a sequel. We loved it so much.



RED DEAD REDEMPTION 2

It's going to happen – the question is, when?

RED DEAD REDEMPTION is our favourite *Grand Theft Auto* game of all time, and was so successful that a sequel seems like a logical course for Rockstar. Hopefully they will take their time with it, as a next-gen *Red Dead* is the kind of special game that we don't mind waiting for. We doubt it will be a direct sequel, rather just another tale of gunslingers and bandits in the vast old west; possibly in a slightly different time period.



⊗ It's been in development for four years, apparently.

THIEF 4

What the *Deus Ex* team did next

THIEF, WHICH WE like to pronounce as "Thuh-feef", was unveiled back in 2009 but we haven't heard much about it since. We've waited long enough and hopefully *Thief 4* will make a reappearance to mark the start of the next gen. What better way to welcome a new console than by stepping back into the shoes of master badass Garrett and having another sneak around the City, this time in glorious next-gen graphics?

On its website, Rockstar said to 'stay tuned' for announcements on *Red Dead*'s future. It might be a while yet.



⊗ It'll be back someday, and it'll be worth waiting for.

MIRROR'S EDGE 2

Freerun on the freerun freeway

MIRROR'S EDGE WAS a great little game that more people should have played. It had flaws, but it made up for those in ambition and heart, as well as great art design. Word on the street around Stockholm is that *Mirror's Edge 2* is in development, presumably at DICE. The first game barely cracked the surface of Faith's story and we'd love to see how EA has improved the inspired parkour gameplay. Hopefully we'll hear something about this soon.



⊗ This isn't *Uncharted 4*, obviously. It'll look even better.

UNCHARTED 4

Expect Drake to make a treasured return

THIS IS GOING to be the killer app for a lot of PlayStation fans. Naughty Dog is synonymous with the brand by this point and rightly so. Now a two-game studio, *The Last Of Us* looks to be ND's send-off for the PS3, while hopefully *Uncharted 4* is in development as an early PS4 title. Drake's got at least one adventure left in him, and a new *Uncharted* title would be the decider for a lot of people when it comes to which new console to buy. It worked for the PS3, right?

HARDWARE PREDICTIONS

So that's the games out of the way – what about the hardware itself? From specs to a redesign of the DualShock, here's what's out there right now...

CROSS-GENERATION RELEASES

It's the same at the beginning of any new console generation – new titles being released not only on the new consoles but the previous gen as well. Expect to see a lot of this, especially for new entries of established franchises on our current consoles. Hell, *Pro Evolution Soccer 2013* still came out on PS2, for goodness sake. Expect to see the PS3 supported for quite some time.

NOT CALLED PLAYSTATION 4?

The codename for the PS4 during development has been "Orbis", which the esteemed minds at **Play** think sounds a bit dumb. The smart money is on the PS4 being called the... PlayStation 4, and history certainly backs up this theory. Could Sony call it something else to try and make it sound new and exciting? The danger here is confusing consumers – how many people thought the Wii U was just a "different" Wii, rather than its superior? At least with the simple PS4 name, people know for sure it's the next PlayStation. PlayStation 4, PlayStation Orbis, PlayStation Banana Hammock, whatever – it's gonna be the PlayStation Something.

SPECS

LOOK ONLINE, THEY'RE KNOCKING AROUND, HIGH-END BUT NOT TOP OF THE RANGE PC SPECS

The PS4 specs are a closely-guarded secret, but spec speculation (har har har) is all over the place if you know where to look. Rumoured components include a quad-core AMD x36 3.2GHz processor, an AMD 8000 series graphics processing unit and two to four gigabytes of GDDR5 RAM, which is faster than regular DDR RAM. If that's all gibberish to you, basically, it's gonna be pretty powerful. Those specs are similar to a current high-end PC, albeit not quite the tip-top of the range. It's all guesswork at this point, so don't take it as gospel.

We'd expect to see hard-drives be changeable again, since it's a practical and cheaper way of doing it than the Xbox uses.

When will PS4 be announced? E3 still seems like the logical guess to us. Kaz Hirai recently said he's waiting for Microsoft to go first.

New PS4 specs seem to leak out every week at the moment, but the consensus is that it's comparable in power to the next Xbox.

CONTROLLER REDESIGN

SOMETHING MORE 360-LIKE IS QUITE LIKELY

Is it time to finally retire the DualShock? PlayStation's famous controller has been almost unchanged since the days of PSone, and maybe it's time for a change. We'd like something with a weightier feel and better triggers on the shoulders, since the DualShock would benefit from some design tweaking. Improved analog stick placement is necessary too, switching the placement of the D-pad and the left stick would go down a treat. And forget about the silly Sixaxis stuff, eh Sony? We didn't enjoy it so much, it turns out.

PREDICTIONS



1 A STRONG SHIFT TOWARDS DIGITAL DISTRIBUTION

This one's a given. Digital distribution is the future, and all of you nostalgic box-hoarders better get with the times, man! Sony has been great at embracing digital distribution and subsidising indie developers to create great exclusive games for PSN. Long may it continue!



2 INCREASED FOCUS ON COPYING NINTENDO

The PlayStation Move is a naff Wii-mote pastiche and reeks of the "Me too!" attitude that Sony and Microsoft embraced after they realised the Wii was doing rather well. The Move might have fallen by the wayside a bit but Wonderbook has taken up the mantle of "latest weird Sony peripheral." Trying to appeal to the "casual" market is all well and good, but Sony's efforts have yet to produce any titles that are much fun to play. With Microsoft likely to continue focus on Kinect, expect Sony to do something similar.



3 FEWER EXCLUSIVE GAMES

Exclusive games are slowly dying out, although Sony put a lot more effort into having great exclusives than Microsoft do. This is a business like any other, and publishers will make more money the more platforms they release their games on. The only exclusives these days come from developers owned by Sony or Microsoft, and we expect the number of these to slowly go down slightly over the course of next-gen, or come digitally instead. Or, alternatively, platform-exclusive DLC.



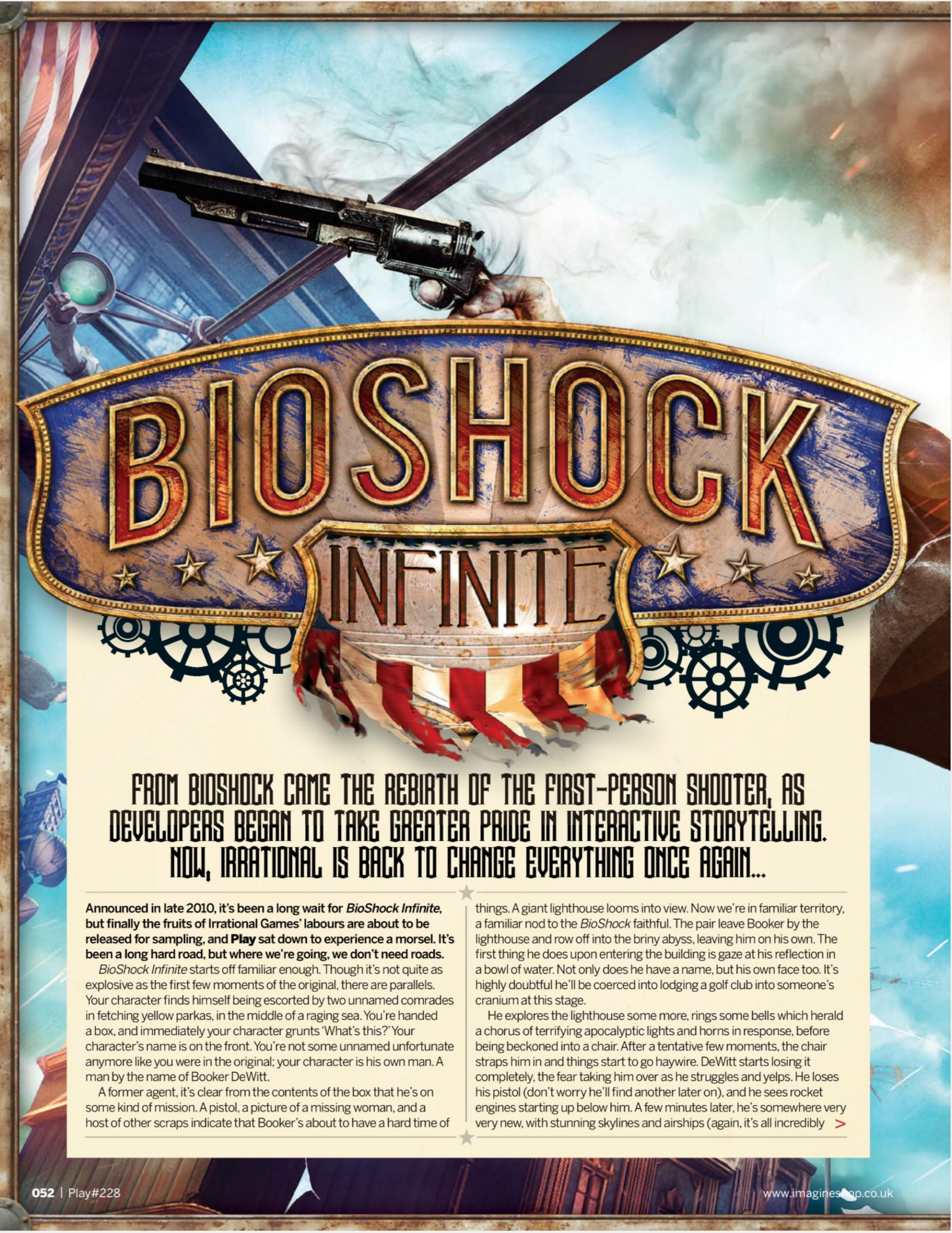
4 MORE PUBLICITY FOR PS PLUS

PS Plus is one of the best things about having a PlayStation 3 – oh how times have changed. It's gone from a useless, overpriced service to a must-have bargain. The amount of stuff you get on PS Plus for a measly £40 a year is astounding, yet scores of people still know nothing about it. Hopefully Sony will up its advertising of the service and make it more front-and-centre on the next-gen XMB. Spread the good word!



5 CLOUD GAMING!

With Sony purchasing Gaikai, this one's a given. The concept of streaming a game directly to your console as you play it is wonderful and proof that we truly do live in the future. Our broadband here in the UK isn't good enough to truly keep up with the service just yet, but give it a few years and we think Gaikai will be a huge part of the services the next PlayStation offers.

The title card for BioShock Infinite features the word "BIO SHOCK" in large, stylized, red-outlined letters with a blue and gold gradient. Below it, the word "INFINITE" is written in a smaller, gold-outlined font. The title is set against a background of a cloudy sky with a large, ornate, blue and gold structure resembling a lighthouse or a ship's hull. A hand holding a revolver is visible in the upper left, and a small, glowing green orb is in the upper right. The entire title is framed by a decorative border with stars and gears.

BIO SHOCK

INFINITE

FROM BIOSHOCK CAME THE REBIRTH OF THE FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER, AS DEVELOPERS BEGAN TO TAKE GREATER PRIDE IN INTERACTIVE STORYTELLING. NOW, IRRATIONAL IS BACK TO CHANGE EVERYTHING ONCE AGAIN...

Announced in late 2010, it's been a long wait for *BioShock Infinite*, but finally the fruits of Irrational Games' labours are about to be released for sampling, and **Play** sat down to experience a morsel. It's been a long hard road, but where we're going, we don't need roads.

BioShock Infinite starts off familiar enough. Though it's not quite as explosive as the first few moments of the original, there are parallels. Your character finds himself being escorted by two unnamed comrades in fetching yellow parkas, in the middle of a raging sea. You're handed a box, and immediately your character grunts 'What's this?' Your character's name is on the front. You're not some unnamed unfortunate anymore like you were in the original; your character is his own man. A man by the name of Booker DeWitt.

A former agent, it's clear from the contents of the box that he's on some kind of mission. A pistol, a picture of a missing woman, and a host of other scraps indicate that Booker's about to have a hard time of

things. A giant lighthouse looms into view. Now we're in familiar territory, a familiar nod to the *BioShock* faithful. The pair leave Booker by the lighthouse and row off into the briny abyss, leaving him on his own. The first thing he does upon entering the building is gaze at his reflection in a bowl of water. Not only does he have a name, but his own face too. It's highly doubtful he'll be coerced into lodging a golf club into someone's cranium at this stage.

He explores the lighthouse some more, rings some bells which herald a chorus of terrifying apocalyptic lights and horns in response, before being beckoned into a chair. After a tentative few moments, the chair straps him in and things start to go haywire. DeWitt starts losing it completely, the fear taking him over as he struggles and yelps. He loses his pistol (don't worry he'll find another later on), and he sees rocket engines starting up below him. A few minutes later, he's somewhere very very new, with stunning skylines and airships (again, it's all incredibly >



IT'S CLEAR FROM THE CONTENTS OF THE BOX THAT HE'S ON SOME KIND OF MISSION. A PISTOL, A PICTURE OF A MISSING WOMAN, AND A HOST OF OTHER SCRAPS INDICATE THAT BOOKER'S ABOUT TO HAVE A HARD TIME



> reminiscent of seeing Rapture through the Bathysphere for the first time), introducing him and us to an entirely new world.

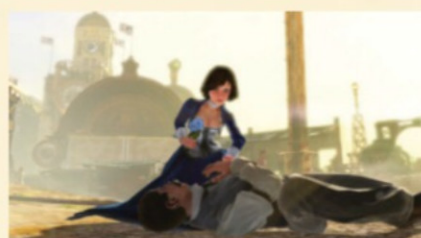
It'd be hard to top the opener of the original *BioShock*. After all, it was a graphical revelation at the time, an introduction dripping (see what we did there?) with atmosphere and the promise of a completely new type of experience. *Infinite* doesn't evoke the same 'Oh my god' factor, but it at least ensures you're not about to miss Rapture. Columbia, the cloud city that'll be your new playground for an undisclosed number of hours, is a far cry from the broken down, libertarian utopia gone wrong of *BioShock*. For one thing, it's still thriving, and there are no splicers out to carve you up. Not initially anyway. It's all incredibly pleasant, a population living a serene, communal existence among the clouds. However, no one buys *BioShock* games for the chat, and it's not long before things are going belly up. It all starts when Booker takes part in a carnival show, presided over by a chap with a similar look and charisma to Daniel Day Lewis' Bill the Butcher character from *Gangs Of New York*. Booker's tasked with throwing a ball at a couple of slaves, instantly dispelling the idyllic atmosphere of the town. You can choose whether to target the slaves, or chuck one in the face of Daniel Day Lewis' doppelganger. Choice will once again play a huge part in *BioShock*, although how big a part it plays remains to be seen.

Once you finally get to let rip with the combat, it's immediately apparent that it's a whole heap better than the original. For all the good it did, *BioShock's* combat felt like an afterthought, lacking impact and feeling altogether quite woolly. *Infinite's* weapons are more entertaining to use, and it's a lot more fun mowing down allcomers with a

meaty shotgun than the outlandish, slightly rubbish weapons of the first game. It's immediately apparent too, just how much more violent *Infinite* is. The first two *BioShock* games had some devastating weaponry, but you never felt they did sufficient enough damage to the splicers. Yes they'd die, but they'd just flop around after being administered the coup de grace. *Infinite* ups the ante with popping heads and dismemberment. Though gore doesn't make a game (and there's an option to turn it off, in case any sensitive souls are watching), it's nice to see for once that the damage meted out in a *BioShock* game has an appropriate aesthetic response. An early kill with the skyhook – Booker's melee weapon and means of transport – sees him brutally lopping the head off some poor sod likely just doing his job.

It's a new thing for *BioShock*, and one that'll have people fond of copious head detonations (these things are important to some) salivating but one thing that isn't new is the use of 'vigors' which we all knew as plasmids in *BioShock*. It wouldn't be an Irrational game without some entertaining unnatural way of turning the tide, and *Infinite* delivers. They work the same way as plasmids, triggered by the left bumper, exploding, killing and manipulating in a litany of entertaining ways. You pick up a fire one pretty early, along with a hacking one, so there's no more tedious art deco pipemania in order to get a machine to do your bidding. In a later segment, you could even fire crows at people, which is wildly entertaining for some reason, and makes you feel like a *Metal Gear Solid* boss.

It's only in a later section that's set a few hours later, where we see just how much more dynamic the game is than its predecessors. By this time you've met up with Elizabeth, the woman you were tasked with saving in the first



AN EARLY KILL WITH THE SKYHOOK – BOOKER'S MELEE WEAPON AND MEANS OF TRANSPORT – SEES HIM BRUTALLY LOPPING THE HEAD OFF SOME POOR SOD LIKELY JUST DOING HIS JOB

place, and she's right by you all the way. Yes we hear you groaning 'Oh no, not a bloody escort mission', but wait! Elizabeth is from the same school of companionship as Farah (for all the foetuses out there she was in *Prince of Persia: Sands of Time*, before Ubisoft seemingly forgot about that franchise), and isn't an annoyance at all. In fact she's pretty bloody essential to your survival. She can't be killed, so you don't have to worry about her like you did with the little sisters, and you'd be absolutely buggedger without her, quite frankly. Elizabeth's talents lie in creating rips in space/time, enabling her to phase in and out of reality so to speak, meaning she won't get lost, and can follow DeWitt closely even when he's speeding along on a sky-line. More importantly though, when you're low on ammo (and this'll happen, especially when you're going up against a handyman, the *Infinite* variation of the Big Daddy) she'll phase out for a bit and return with supplies and replenishments. What a nice lady.

It's during this later segment when we see just how much better Irrational are at combat than it was. In earlier *BioShock* games, there was always lingering dread about the next fracas, and not in a survival horror 'Argh what's >



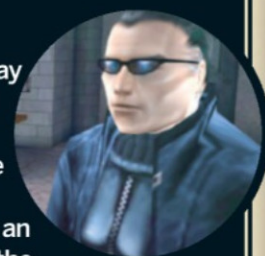


LEVINE LA VIDA LOCA

Ken Levine helped pioneer the first-person narrative adventure with the likes of *Thief* and *System Shock II* when he was at Looking Glass studios. *BioShock Infinite* even has a difficulty called 1999 mode dedicated to the *System Shock* hardcore. Here are some games that wouldn't exist had it not been for his Midas touch...

1 DEUS EX

It's a fair bet that had Levine et al not paved the way with the likes of *Thief* or *System Shock 2*, there'd be no *Deus Ex*. Developed by Ion Storm in 2000 (after John Romero tried and failed to make everyone his bitch with the execrable *Daikatana*), it was a revelation. A sprawling, ambitious game that became an instant classic, it's highly likely it wouldn't have been the same had Levine not paved the way.



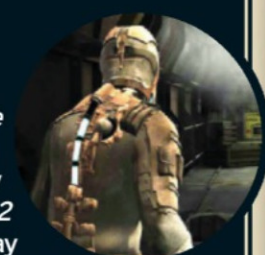
2 THE DARKNESS

The Darkness owes as much to Levine as it does to the (unfortunately slightly naff) comic books that inspired it. It didn't win everyone over, but its story was spot on, a dramatic and brilliantly bleak affair that saw protagonist Jackie Estacado come to terms with his new Mike Patton-voiced powers (which levelled up as you erm, ate more hearts) and extreme tragedy.



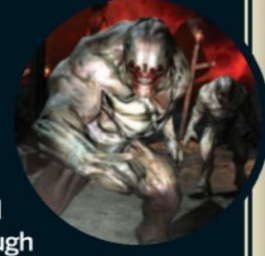
3 DEAD SPACE

The original *BioShock* disappointed some who were expecting *System Shock 3*, but *Dead Space* had them covered. It was a linear third person horror shooter but its atmosphere was so brilliantly, horribly oppressive. It also did that thing from *System Shock 2* where you find people's old audilogos where they'll say stuff like 'Jannety's being a real dick today, he ate my soup and nicked my dirty mag... wait, what's that sound coming from the ventsAAAAARGGGGGH I'm dead.' All good fun.



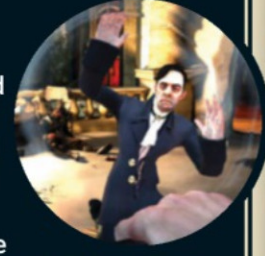
4 DOOM 3

Yep, even the masters themselves nicked some ideas for Levine. I'd obviously thought a relentless blaster wasn't the right thing to do in 2004, so *Doom 3* slowed the pace right down and tried to scare you silly by sneaking up behind you and saying BOO rather than getting you into a panic through sheer overwhelming numbers. Also did the audilogos thing. Also the Cyberdemon was so rubbish, silly Carmack.



5 DISHONORED

Dishonored snuck out of nowhere and impressed everyone that got their hands on it. It's pretty obvious Arkane Studios supped greatly from the well of Levine, particularly *Thief*. Again it helped build the lore of the City of Dunwall through all the notes left around, detailing all the nasty things happening. More games should feature notes and audilogos lying around, it's always nice that these people take the time to record the last few moments of their lives before they're about to snuff it.

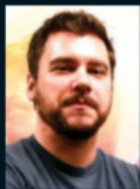


There's always some genuine narrative substance to Ken Levine's games.



DREW HOLMES

INTERVIEW



Drew Holmes was one of the writers on *BioShock Infinite*, so expect nothing about DLC or any other bollocks about games, and instead a load of stuff about allegory, the nature of choice, comparisons to movies and that. Although he did work on *Saints Row 3*, so we're not talking Cormac McCarthy here. Nice man.

The original was a big critique of Libertarianism and took a few digs at ideas espoused by the likes of Ayn Rand. Will Infinite continue this or do its own thing? There seem to be parallels with the Tea Party movement...

Well that's not intentional, but I think it's interesting that factions like the Tea Party tend to crop up decade after decade. The ideas and central themes of the games had been devised long before the Tea Party stuff started up again. We'd rather the player draw their own conclusions from the issues we present. We want to step back and let people make the debate for themselves.

We noticed that one of the characters looks like Daniel Day-Lewis's character from Gangs Of New York, so it's a fair assumption that was a visual influence. What else informed the making of Infinite?

Aaaah that's Plainview. We definitely wanted to make him larger than life. Yeah, we watched a lot of movies and consumed a lot of media during development in order to better inform what we wanted to do with the game. As people play it I'm hoping they'll notice there's a big Coen Brothers (*Fargo*, *O Brother Where Art Thou?*) influence. Ken's a fan so they have a big influence on him. *Miller's Crossing* was hugely influential on the first *BioShock*.

Games are definitely coming into their own as a medium on the writing side, what with stuff like the original BioShock and Spec Ops: The Line. Is it exciting times from a narrative standpoint?

It's not that I'm saying every game needs to have a deep story, but I think it's cool that stuff is happening on that front. The medium is ever evolving

and we're still piecing together the language of storytelling in videogames. I think as we become more comfortable and learn more, we'll see cool stuff. Like, *Irrational* have been around for 15 years, and pretty much helped begin the narrative-driven first-person genre that we're seeing now, with *Thief*. 15 years is a small amount of time to hone a craft, and I think we'll just continually get better in the future. We're trying, failing and learning. Film has had plenty of time to evolve, so I think we're just now starting to really discover what we can really do with the medium. You can have something like *Limbo*, which has a very minimalist approach, but you can get a hell of a lot out of it. The best stories always invite debate about what the meaning truly is.

You go out your way early on to emphasise that Booker is his own man. Was this done in a way to immediately differentiate Infinite from its predecessors?

Yeah, it was definitely a conscious choice, to make it clear to people that it's not the same game. There are certain thematic elements that people will recognise, like the lighthouse, as well as other things that delve into more spoilerific territory. It was important because we wanted to establish Booker's character before the game really kicks off. There's a small window of time to make sure you have a sense of who he is before you dive into it. The sooner players are on board with him as the person the more immersed they'll become. We wanted to make sure he was a character the player could trust as well. You're seeing the game through his eyes so we don't want anything to be called into question, there's no 'unreliable narrator' ambiguity with him.



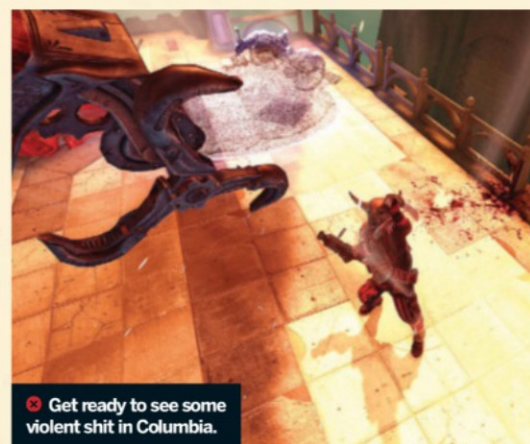
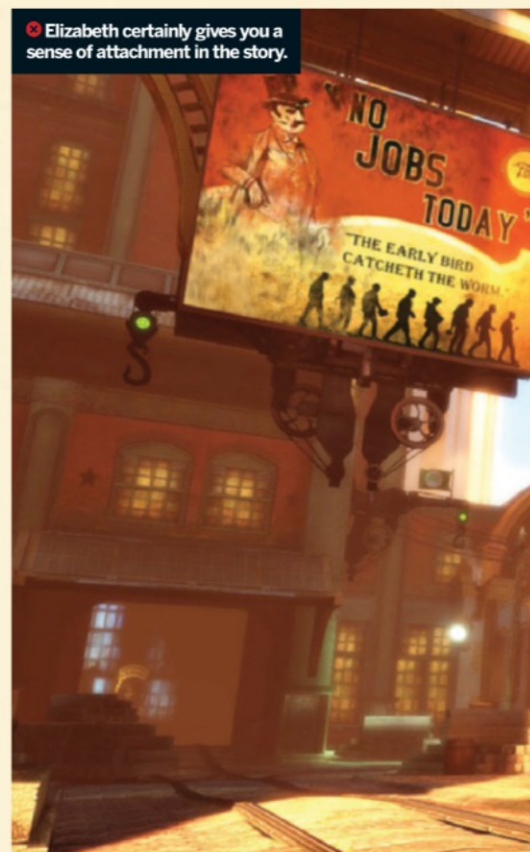
IT'S A FUN WAY TO GET THE DROP ON YOUR UNSUSPECTING QUARRY, AND IT HELPS THE GAME FEEL AS FRANTIC AND EXCITING AS THE BEST SHOOTERS IN THE GENRE

> around the next corner' way. Each time you heard a Big Daddy stomping along, or a gaggle of splicers talking bollocks a palpable sense of ennui washed over you, as you realised you were about to spend the next few minutes in a fight trying to get to grips with some shonky-feeling weaponry.

Not so in *Infinite*. You're immediately more agile and handy with a weapon, especially in conjunction with Elizabeth. The big winner for you though is the use of the skyhook in conjunction with the sky-lines, and it adds a new level of excitement and depth to an already improved experience. If things get hairy on one level, or Booker finds himself ambushed by a turret-spewing airship, he can leap off the edge (there's no penalty for leaping off the edge and falling, as you're immediately phased back into the action) connect with a skyline, and zoom off to another platform for a better chance at managing the situation. It's a fun way to get the drop on your unsuspecting quarry, and it helps the game feel as frantic and exciting as the best shooters in the genre. In fact, the traversal feels more like something from *Crysis 2* than the original *BioShock*. That's not to say that *Crysis 2* is one of the best shooters around but the fact that a *BioShock* game can compare to a top tier first-person shooter in the first place surely speaks volumes.

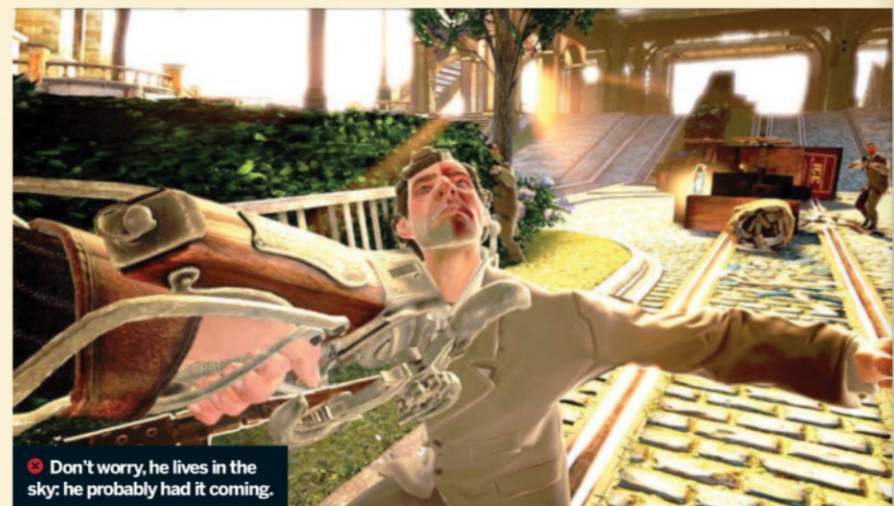
You'll need the extra mobility, as the Handymen are a lot more agile than the lunkheaded Big Daddies of yore. They're incredibly fast, and can use the skylines too, meaning you're constantly on your toes while you're throwing everything in your arsenal at them, as you pray Elizabeth'll make do on her promise to bring more ammunition. The one handyman encountered was tough, but fair. With the Big Daddies there really wasn't a lot of tension fighting them, owing to the fact that even after death and resurrection in the Vita Chamber, their health was still depleted from your last encounter, meaning you could constantly bash a Big Daddy with a spanner and die repeatedly, safe in the knowledge that the great metal brute would fall by your hand, no matter how utterly ineffective that hand was. The

Elizabeth certainly gives you a sense of attachment in the story.

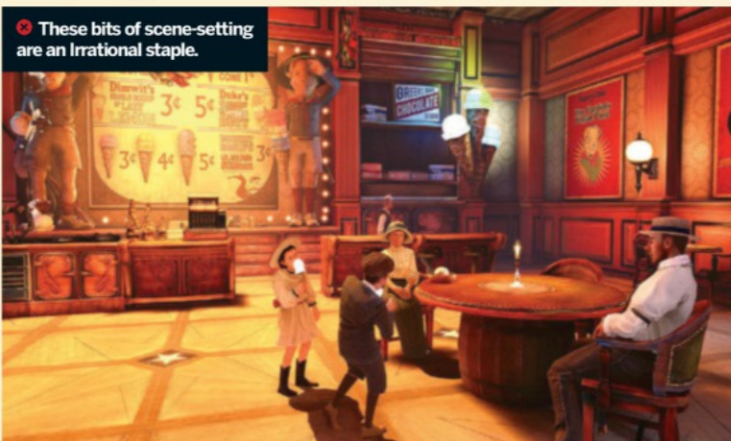


Get ready to see some violent shit in Columbia.

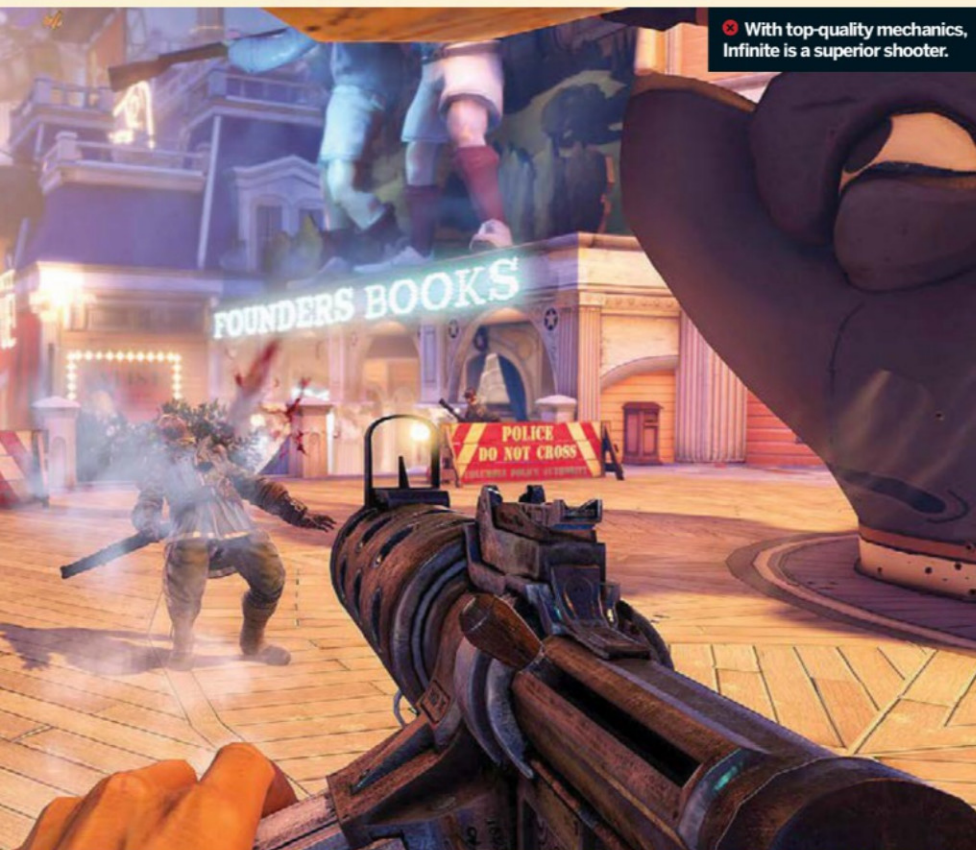




✖ These bits of scene-setting are an Irrational staple.



✖ With top-quality mechanics, Infinite is a superior shooter.



Handymen are infinitely more fun to fight, and after your death, it seemed like they got some of their health back too, so there's a lot more incentive to stay alive this time around. Once the moustachioed beast was felled (and it can be revealed that **Play** was the first publication in the UK to take out one of the bastards, so this issue should be framed or something), the playthrough was over, giving us but a cursory glimpse of the ultra-violent delights to be found in *Infinite*.

It's been a long time coming, but *BioShock Infinite* is definitely shaping up very well indeed. It was fraught with rumours of a troubled development cycle, as tales of Ken Levine's perfectionism were revealed through interviews with ex-employees and others, but as per the old axiom, 'If you're not going to do something right, it's not worth doing at all.' Irrational have taken steps to avoid the flaws of its earlier games, providing a slick, fun experience. It's a much better game than its predecessors, and also a step forward for the developers. Columbia is a much more vibrant, alive place than Rapture, and it's encouraging that in these days of rampant homogenisation and everyman shooters set in muddy brown warzones, we still have developers like Irrational Games willing to craft interesting new worlds and settings. Columbia is unlike the

majority of we've seen in a game before, though it does bring to mind Arkane Studios' seminal *Dishonored*, another first person narrative adventure with a vibrant, unique art style, though they're completely different experiences.

Most encouragingly, there's no arbitrary, tacked-on multiplayer to dilute the game. God knows how many games have been ruined by a feature doubtless pushed forward by some clueless moneyman, greedily eyeing the *Call of Duty* dollar, and there were rumours *Infinite* would have a few features like this, but thankfully (whether it's through intention or not being able to implement these features properly no one knows) it's single player only. *Spec Ops: The Line* was the most recent victim, the seminal, forward-thinking shooter lumbered with multiplayer components that successfully negated the narrative intentions of the single-player.

BioShock Infinite is a game to be experienced as a single-player game, perhaps with a glass of wine and a roaring fire if you're feeling particularly sophisticated. At no point would having a disgruntled, over-privileged teenager hurling homophobic epithets over the internet add to the experience. It's a sprawling, stimulating game, full of character and allegory, that'll doubtless find itself party to some pretty rapturous (hohoho) praise upon its release in March. ✖



WHY INDIE GAMES ARE CHANGING PLAYSTATION

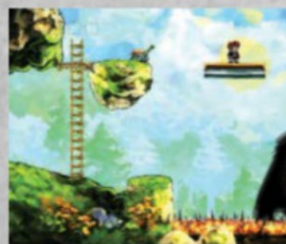
The indie explosion of the last few years has brought back small team and bedroom coding in a big way, and it's in no small part thanks to Sony's efforts and encouragement. We explain – with some developer help – why it all matters

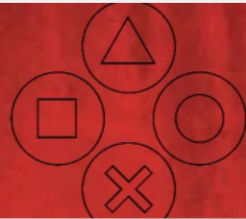
There's a world beyond *Call Of Duty*, you know? It's not a world for everyone, sure. Not everyone can get onboard with a little man named Barry running and jet-packing his way through an endless hazard-filled laboratory. Not everyone enjoys the process of feeding a giraffe that's suffering serious hunger pangs. A lot of people just want to stick with *Call Of Duty*, you know? But there's a world beyond it.

Sony recognises this. Sony, grand, faceless corporation that it is, recognises the value of the independent developers beaver away on any and all projects they can. It's not a fight – we're not the types to lower ourselves to petty jibes – but it is fair to say Sony is much better at courting and encouraging the wild

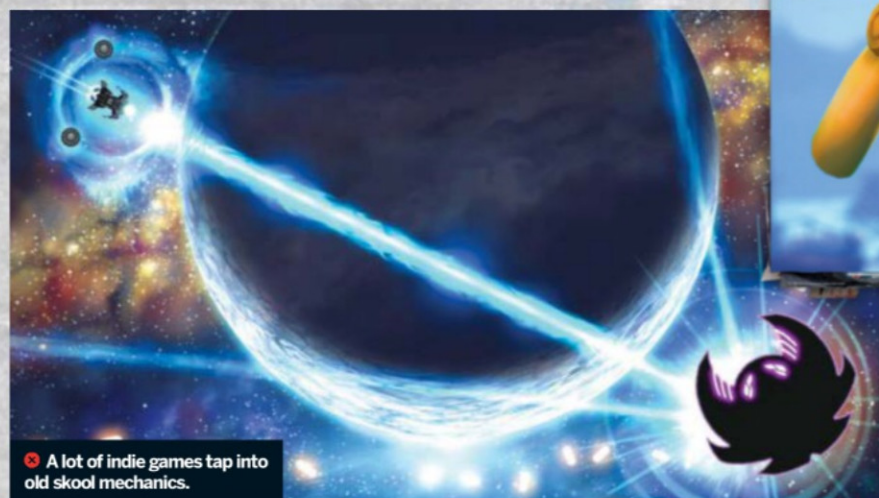
creativity of the independent mind than Microsoft is. And it's something worth celebrating.

One of our favourite independent developers, James Marsden of Futurlab, agrees: "Sony are supportive of independent developers. They're also very receptive to creativity. When I say they, I mean the individual people that work at Sony." He goes on: "They are very creatively minded and excited about different ways of thinking. I watched from afar as Jenova Chen got his deal with PlayStation and decided they were the publisher we wanted to work with. We enjoy working with them very much because our tastes are aligned in this way."





⊗ Not every design experiment works.



⊗ A lot of indie games tap into old skool mechanics.



THE HARD QUESTION

PLAY: THE MAGAZINE JEREMY PAXMAN WOULD BE PROUD OF

Being the rough-and-ready journalists we are at Play, we like to ask the hard questions. It's just sometimes we don't get the hard answers. Nevertheless, it's a very fair point to raise: console marketplaces – on Sony consoles and elsewhere – are unlikely to ever be as open as they are on the free and easy world of the PC. Yes, a world that open would mean a lot more tripe and less visibility for a lot of genuinely worthwhile games as they get crowded out, at least compared to on something like PSN. But generally speaking we would always prefer a system more like the walled garden of Steam over the very-high-walled garden of PSN. Does Mr Marsden agree?

"I've not been in this industry long, but I've been in it long enough to realise that it's impossible to predict how platforms will develop. We just focus on making good games, and do our best to take advantage of good opportunities."

Like we said: we ask the hard questions, but we don't always get the hard answers.

Sony has stepped forward with a few initiatives, like PlayStation C.A.M.P ('Creator Audition Mash up Project'), which brought us the wonderful *Tokyo Jungle*, and more famously the line of minis. These were put out there to compete with Apple's apps and Android's... wait, what *does* Android have? Moving on... The minis were a selection of games, mainly independently developed, for a couple of quid and with less of the bells and whistles you might expect as a result.

It was a very public showing of support for the ethos of indie. Even with something as universally loved as Futurlab's *Velocity* – easily the best mini out there – it wasn't plain sailing: "Initially Sony thought the game was too hardcore for them to support," Marsden tells us. "To be fair to them, the early prototype we showed had all of the mechanics introduced over just a handful of levels – it didn't have the elegant learning curve *Velocity* has now. In

IT'S AN ATTITUDE LIKE THAT FROM SONY THAT SHINES THROUGH REPEATEDLY WITH THE GAMES WE DO SEE RELEASED OVER PSN. IT'S A COMPANY THAT GIVES CHANCES OUT

fact, it was most likely the rejection we received from Sony early on that inspired us to focus a great deal on making the learning curve great."

It's an attitude like that from Sony that shines through repeatedly with the games we do see released over PSN: it's a company that

gives chances out. It's a company that lets *Battlefield 3* and *Hitman: Absolution* sit on the virtual shelves next to *Monsters (Probably) Stole My Princess* and *Where Is My Heart?*.

Even so, there has been a definite move from those in charge away from the idea that minis are the be-all, end-all way to get into that little game, little price market. While the initiative was launched with some fanfare and many got behind a handful of miniature titles, there were teething problems that never went away.

Marsden clarifies: "Sony want to support PS Vita one hundred per cent, and I get the feeling they've learned that calling minis 'minis'

might not have been such a good idea. *Velocity Ultra* is a small game compared to *Uncharted: Golden Abyss*, but it's the price that will reflect that, not a category label. I think that's better for all involved." This doesn't for one second mean the death of the minis label, but it does mean those teeny-weeny games you get for your PS3 and Vita are no longer going to be lumbered with the silly tagline... at least not as much. We're all for that.

Not that we're suggesting minis are bad in any way, as Marsden was quick to chastise us on: "Minis gave us the opportunity to create *Velocity*, is that not successful enough?" Point taken.➤





> But even before minis – and (possibly) after them – Sony has always been the best of the console manufacturers for indie titles. It gave *Joe Danger* the chance it needed, after the game languished in limbo for months on end (the famous story of the original being shown in the **Play** office, taking up a couple of hours of our time before we were told “we don’t know what platform it’s going to release on... if any”). It allowed the aforementioned Jenova Chen and his team to work wonders with some fantastic releases, like *Flower* and the incomparable *Journey*.

Whatever the future of indie games on PlayStation formats, it’s bound

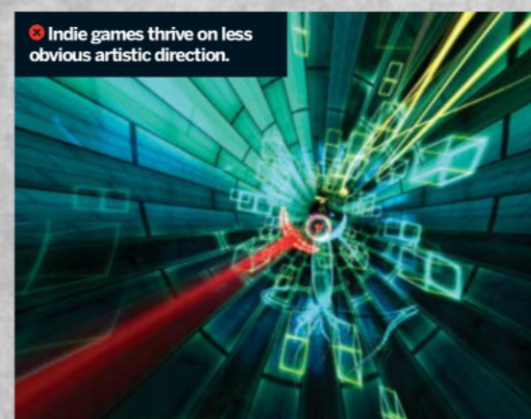
there’s only one thing for it: “Our plan is to impress with our PS Vita work so that we’re asked to join in fairly early with PlayStation 4.” Confirmation of PS4! Not really.

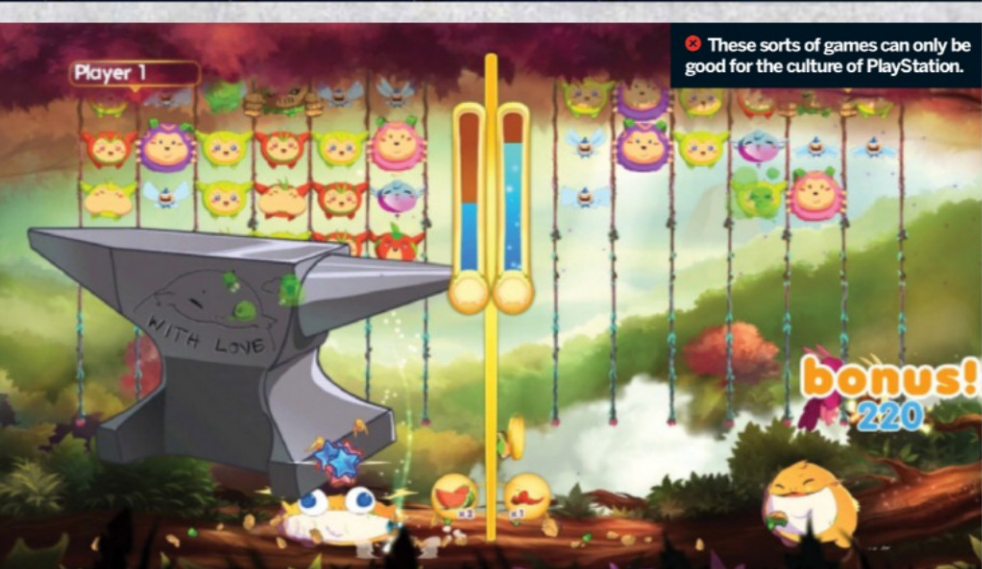
And whatever does happen with the new generation of consoles, there’s definitely going to be indie support in this brave new world we live in. Marsden’s love for the method of making games is backed up thusly: “We are in control of our own successes, and our own failures, but we are always in control.” And that’s what it’s all about – control. Making your own thing. Proving yourself. Striking out on your own. Never selling out.

Unless you sell out, that is: “There are some ideas we have that are epic. Gigantic.” Marsden tells us, probably while winking, “If it meant selling FuturLab to a larger publisher in order to realise one of those ideas, I’d consider it.”

But for the time being FuturLab is sticking around and we’re definitely going to see more from the *Velocity* developers. Hopefully more like the rather excellent and overlooked *Surge*, which is available for a pittance through the PS Mobile section of the Store (public service announcement over).

to be bright – and we’re likely to see releases pick up as the inevitable PlayStation 4 comes about. Marsden informed us of the logic: “I think Sony tends to go through cycles. When new platforms are launched, Sony works hard to bring talent to its platforms. We’ve been on the receiving end of this for PlayStation Vita, but I’m sure it must have happened at the start of PS3, PSP, PS2, etc.” So of course





While Marsden and his studio has recently signed a deal with Sony, which might make some question the actual independence of the team (shut up, it's still an indie studio), this can only really be a good thing for it: "As a company it means we can focus on what we love to do without distraction, which is nothing short of a godsend. Personally speaking, I'm a huge PlayStation fan boy. It was a childhood dream to be making games for PlayStation, so I'm really very, very happy."

This is something not all indies get though, and it's understandable – even the biggest of publishers can't offer support to every single one of the talented developers out there. There are going to be losses, failures, people turning their back on an industry they were made for, and there are going to be some angry and sad times for those who can't make the breakthrough in an industry they truly love.

But we think Sony will give out the chances, and the cream can rise. Marsden tells us his advice for the aspiring indies (pep talk time): "I would suggest that developers look at the kind of games that they

love, that inspire them, and look at the publishers or platforms that are responsible for those games, and go work with them. PlayStation recognise and support genuine creative innovation, and that's why we're working with them, as that's what we want to be doing as a studio." This isn't an 'us versus them' situation; it's not intended to be shown as anyone taking sides. There's a place for the blockbuster triple-A titles just as much as there is the individual-developer-made retro shoot-'em-up – just as much as there is for the ever-more squeezed out single-A game. But indie titles on PlayStation formats do often get overlooked and ignored, and Sony's contribution to the betterment of indie development isn't always championed as much as it should be. It's worth pointing out, it's worth shouting about and it's worth getting excited about. Because there's a world beyond *Call Of Duty*, you know? >

THANKS SHAHID

FUTURLAB HAS TRANSFORMED ITS MINI RELEASE TO A FULL VITA ONE. HOW DID *VELOCITY ULTRA* COME ABOUT?

Marsden explains: "We tried several times to get *Velocity* signed up for PS Vita with Sony and others, but were unsuccessful for a number of reasons. We decided instead to set ourselves the goal of making the best game on minis, using it as a showcase of our abilities in the hope it would generate interest in a PS Vita version later down the line. We were very open about our intentions with the press and gamers, and fortunately we've had the support we needed to make that a reality. When it came down to it though, you can thank one person, Shahid Ahmad, the guy within Sony who played *Velocity* for a few hours on a Sunday and decided that it should be on PS Vita natively. All together now: 'THANKS SHAHID!'"



THE

10 GAMES WE WANT TO SEE

SONY'S GOOD WITH INDIES, BUT NOT PERFECT. HERE'S TEN INDIE RELEASES FROM RECENT YEARS WE WANT TO SEE ON PSN.



MINECRAFT

DEVELOPER: MOJANG

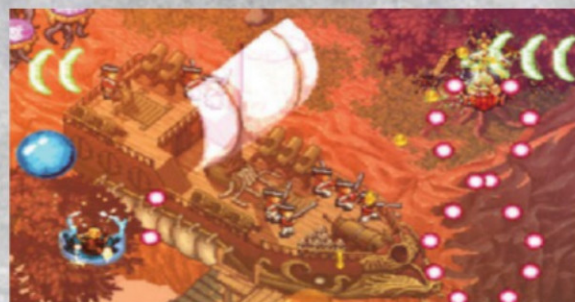
IT'S OBVIOUS, BUT obvious for a very good reason: *Minecraft* is excellent. If you haven't played it, we're just going to go ahead and tell you to pick it up, be it on PC or Xbox or whatever. It's near-enough a life-changing experience. Build anything you want, or just dig, or just shear sheep, or just run away from creepers, or just... whatever you want, really. It's simple and absolutely fantastic, and why it isn't on PSN is something we don't know for sure. We do know for sure that this hurts us.



FROG FRACTIONS

DEVELOPER: TWIN BEARD STUDIOS

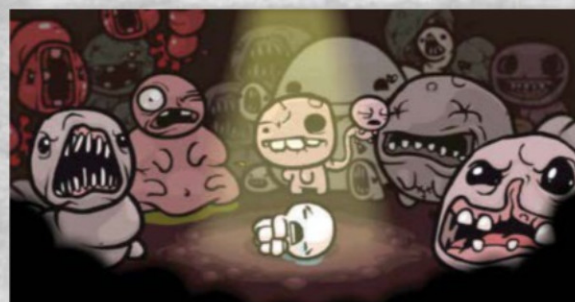
A game that has the capacity to get people in trouble, merely because the description of the game is so utterly ludicrous-sounding it would sound like they're taking the piss. But they wouldn't be. It's real. *Frog Fractions* is utterly ludicrous and to try and explain it is to do the game a massive disservice. If you're turned off by intentionally 'random' experiences, then we apologise for you being totally devoid of any joy in your life. Oh, also you won't get on with *Frog Fractions*.



JAMESTOWN

DEVELOPER: FINAL FORM GAMES

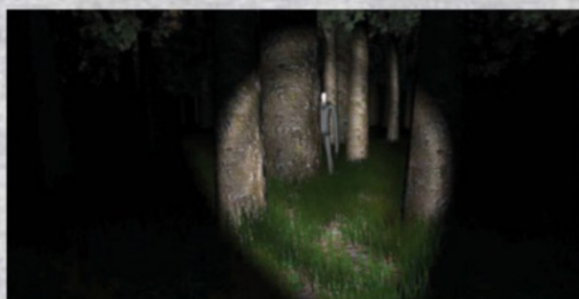
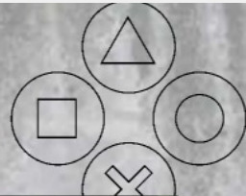
It's one of those days when only the blurb from the game's website will do the thing any justice: "*Jamestown* is a neo-classical top-down shooter for up to four players set on 17th-century British Colonial Mars." Why in the name of everything the almighty Thor stands for would you not want to play that on your Vita while riding the train to Bognor Regis? It would make your life so much better than it currently is, you wouldn't even mind that you're going to Bognor Regis. Which is called Bognor Regis.



THE BINDING OF ISAAC

DEVELOPER: EDMUND MCMILLEN & FLORIAN HIMSL

A lazy comparison would be to say *Isaac* is like an old-school *Zelda* game, except an old-school *Zelda* game where you control a naked, crying baby trying to escape his mother who is trying to kill him (to prove her faith, naturally). *The Binding Of Isaac* encapsulates everything that sets indie development apart from the mainstream: it would never, not in a million years, be released as it was if it was backed by the likes of EA or Activision. And for that we only end up loving it more.



SLENDER

DEVELOPER: MARK J HADLEY

One day, many months ago, **Play** was doing its thing of being the best magazine around when suddenly we discovered this indie gem. This utterly terrifying indie gem. **Play** proceeded to spread *Slender* around the office, forcing people to play it, laughing as they jumped, howling with delight as they screamed and – in one particular instance – being unable to stop the mirthful tears as the member of **Play**'s digital team literally ran away from his desk rather than put up with the terror for one more second. Bliss.



FTL

DEVELOPER: SUBSET GAMES

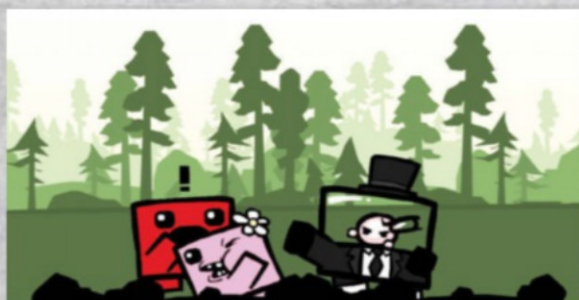
If ever there was a game more suited to the Vita, it's *FTL*. It's basically every sci-fi nerd's sex dream: you're the captain of a ship making a mad dash across the galaxy to deliver much-needed intel on the enemy rebel force. Along the way you will die, again and again, as you make what turn out to be terrible choices about what to do with scraps, hiring crew, exploration... And you'll start again from scratch. And you'll die. And you'll repeat this process – and you'll enjoy it *every step of the way*.



TORCHLIGHT 2

DEVELOPER: RUNIC GAMES

On the upper tier of indie games you get releases like *Torchlight 2* – receiving much in the way of column inches in many popular mags and websites even though it wasn't a triple-A major league release. Why? Because the first game – also an indie release – was utterly brilliant. That's about it. It was unexpectedly fantastic (and cheap), sold by the ton and as a result saw its sequel become even more popular than the first. Still, though, we see no console version. SAD PANDA FACE.



SUPER MEAT BOY

DEVELOPER: TEAM MEAT

So putting two games with the input of one man on this list – Edmund McMillen – is a bit of a naughty on our part, but they're both so excellent it's impossible to ignore. *Super Meat Boy* is near-enough confirmed to never be coming to PSN, and that hurts us. It's the *Dark Souls* of the platforming genre: a game that kills you hundreds of times but that you'll start again on hundreds of times (and one more). It's fantastic.



MARK OF THE NINJA

DEVELOPER: KLEI ENTERTAINMENT

Damn those exclusivity agreements that we never get to see but assume are lucrative and fancy, we want you to not exist. If you didn't exist we would be able to have games like the absolutely fantastic *Mark Of The Ninja* on PSN. Imagine sneaking and slashing and generally being a badass – but on Vita instead of the stupid, smelly 360. Man, that would be excellent. Instead we get a big fat pile of nothing and it makes us very sad.



HOTLINE MIAMI

DEVELOPER: DENNATON GAMES

At least with this one we can almost say we might well be getting it, as Dennaton revealed a while ago it was having talks with Sony about porting the game to PSN. There's been radio silence since then, mind you, and Dennaton has refused to clarify what's going on. Still, none of this stops *Hotline Miami* from being an incredible experience mixing psychedelic Eighties lunacy with fast-paced, twitchy, strategic ultraviolence. There's good, then there's *Hotline Miami* good.

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REVIEWS

We play games and give them a score

RELEASE DATE: 21 FEBRUARY

Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance

Of Slice And Zen



DETAILS

Publisher
Konami
Developer
PlatinumGames
Price
£39.99
Players
1
Genre
Action
Age Rating
18
Website
www.konami.jp/mgr
Twitter
@konami
Facebook
www.facebook.com/metalgearrising



This genre is changing. It might not seem like it at a glance, but whatever you call this brand of videogame, be it character action, brawler, hack-and-slash or anything else, there are subtle but significant changes afoot. And they're definitely for the better. You see, games like *Devil May Cry*, like *Ninja Gaiden*, have always been defined by two things – their precision, and their difficulty. These were wars of attrition, games to punish the weak; bastions for the strong-willed and patient. With *Bayonetta*, though, PlatinumGames changed that dynamic forever, and it's a new tradition it is maintaining with the frankly wonderful *Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance*.

Neither *Bayonetta*, nor *Rising*, are hard. That's not to say they're not demanding, requiring extreme levels of concentration, aptitude and dexterity, but they don't feel the need to kick you in the mouth constantly. Whereas games like *Devil May Cry 3* and the wonderful *God Hand* frequently forced you back to distant checkpoints upon death, these games do not. Where they forced the difficulty to extreme levels within minutes, these games don't. They're – for fear of alienating the supposed 'hardcore' – more accessible.

And the beauty of that, is, that you're now given the time to learn the intricate, world-class combat systems before you really do tackle the extremities of their harder difficulty modes. They're just more palatable, aware of

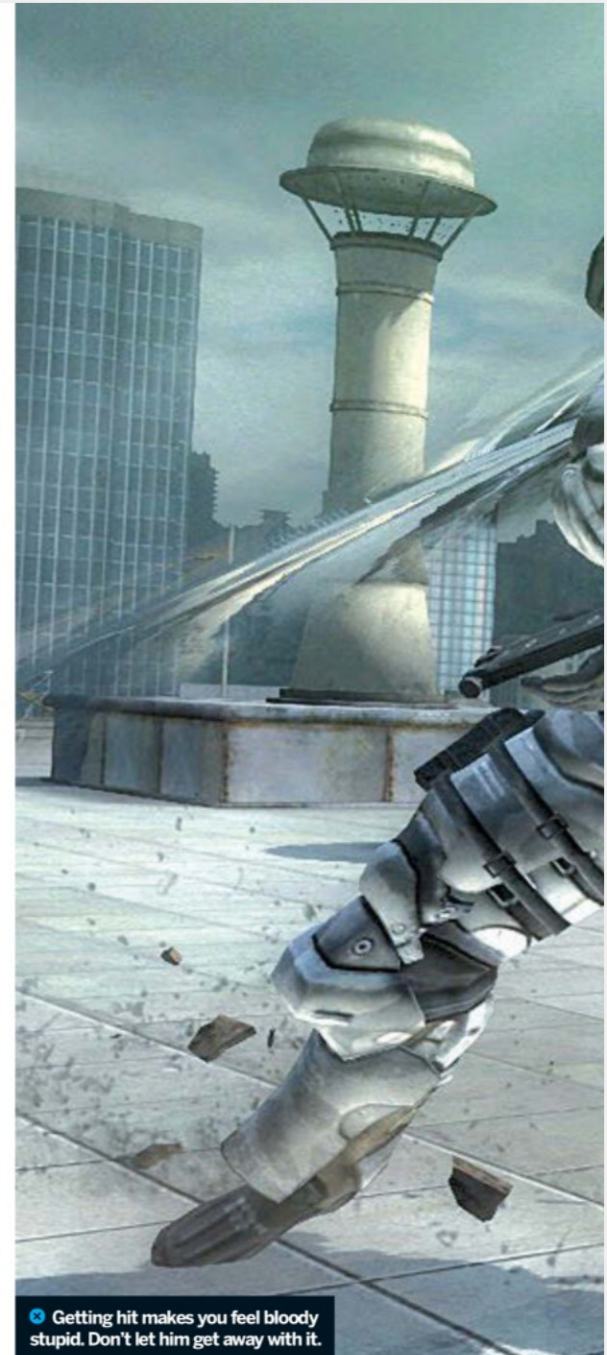
player's time constraints, of the distractions of a gaming world that is inundated with other stuff to play and do. *Metal Gear Rising* will kick your arse, and take pleasure doing it, but it'll then pick you up by the hand, nod its head, and ask you to fight again.

So, what exactly is *Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance*, apart from another genre entry from the masters of the art? Well, you probably know that you play as Raiden, aka Jack, the once-weedy second character from *Metal Gear Solid 2* who forged a new role himself by kicking everything to death in *Metal Gear 4*. You're still in the war-torn world of *Metal Gears*, but there's no Solid Snake, Big Boss or Otacon in sight. Instead, you're teamed up with a PMC, and charged with looking after the president of Liberia.

Quickly, he's kidnapped and murdered by a cybernetic group of terrorists, and you decide to give chase, uncovering all manner of conspiracies along the way.

It's a fun story, way less talky than most *Metal Gear* games, but just as ponderous. It still rides the line between political soapboxing and anime-powered fantasy, and there are enough familiar names and nods that MGS-heads will feel satiated. It's definitely a *Metal Gear* game. It just happens

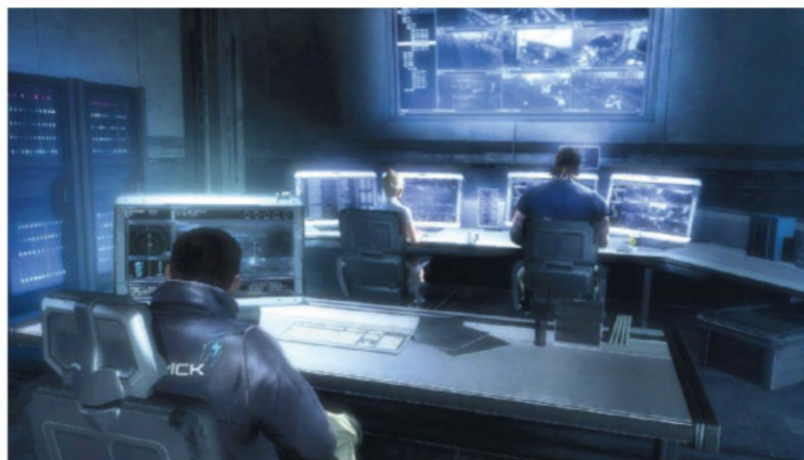
Platinum has masterfully combined the MGS world, with its melons, codec chirps and porn mags with its own burgeoning universe



to be one with a tremendous, unprecedented level of destruction.

Raiden's sword is capable of cutting through pretty much anything in the world, be it a hapless enemy, a stray car, or even the support pillar of an overhead highway. Along with his light and heavy attacks, he can activate 'blade mode' (with a jab of L1) at any time, putting you into an over-the-shoulder cam where you can slice in any direction you choose to tilt the right stick. At first, this is a hilarious novelty, and you'll likely spend as much time slicing weak baddies into little sushi chunks while marvelling at the ingenuity of such a system.

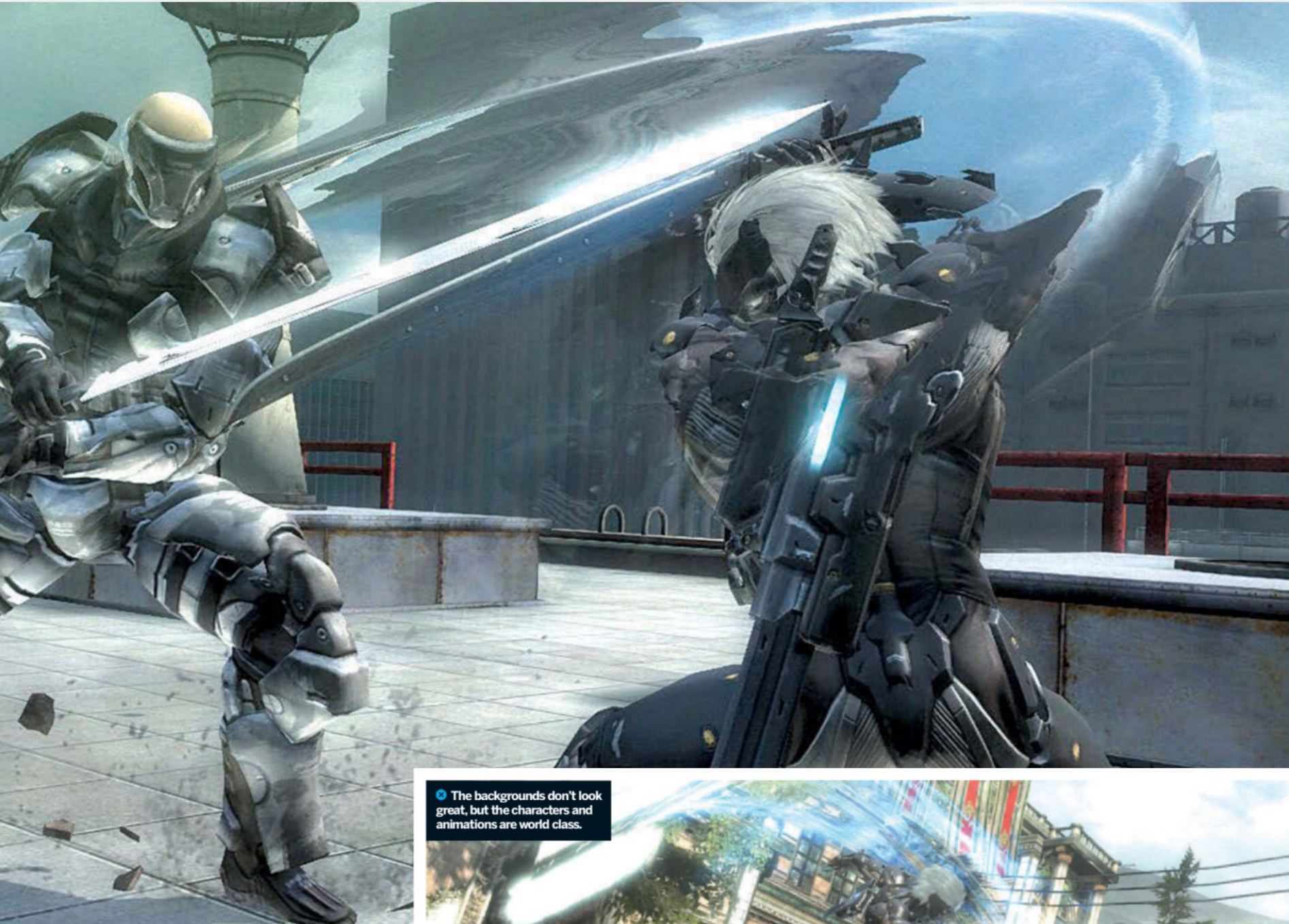
Like everything in a Platinum game, though, it soon becomes a crucial and integral part of the combat. Enemies become 'sliceable' when they emit an orange flash, and when you then activate blade mode, a small square will hover over their chest (or equivalent – there are a lot of weird robotic bad guys in *Rising*). Slice through that square, and Raiden will yank out their cybernetic heart and squish it in the coolest way imaginable, which immediately replenishes his health and blade mode meters. It's called a Zandatsu, it's crucial to the game's scoring system, and it's astonishingly satisfying.



VIRTUAL INSANITY

VR Missions are back, and they're brutal

PROVING THAT THE actual setting for *Metal Gear Rising*'s combat is largely irrelevant, a healthy host of VR missions provide plenty of play once the campaign is finished. Outside of a few tutorial missions, you're looking at increasingly tricky combat scenarios that are scored in the same way as scraps in the campaign. They're all suitably thrilling, distilling the game's best features into highly difficult and brutal skirmishes, but the fact you have to unlock them by finding them throughout the campaign is a bit of a shame. On our first playthrough, we uncovered four out of twenty, so it'll take a dedicated treasure hunter to get them all.



❖ The backgrounds don't look great, but the characters and animations are world class.

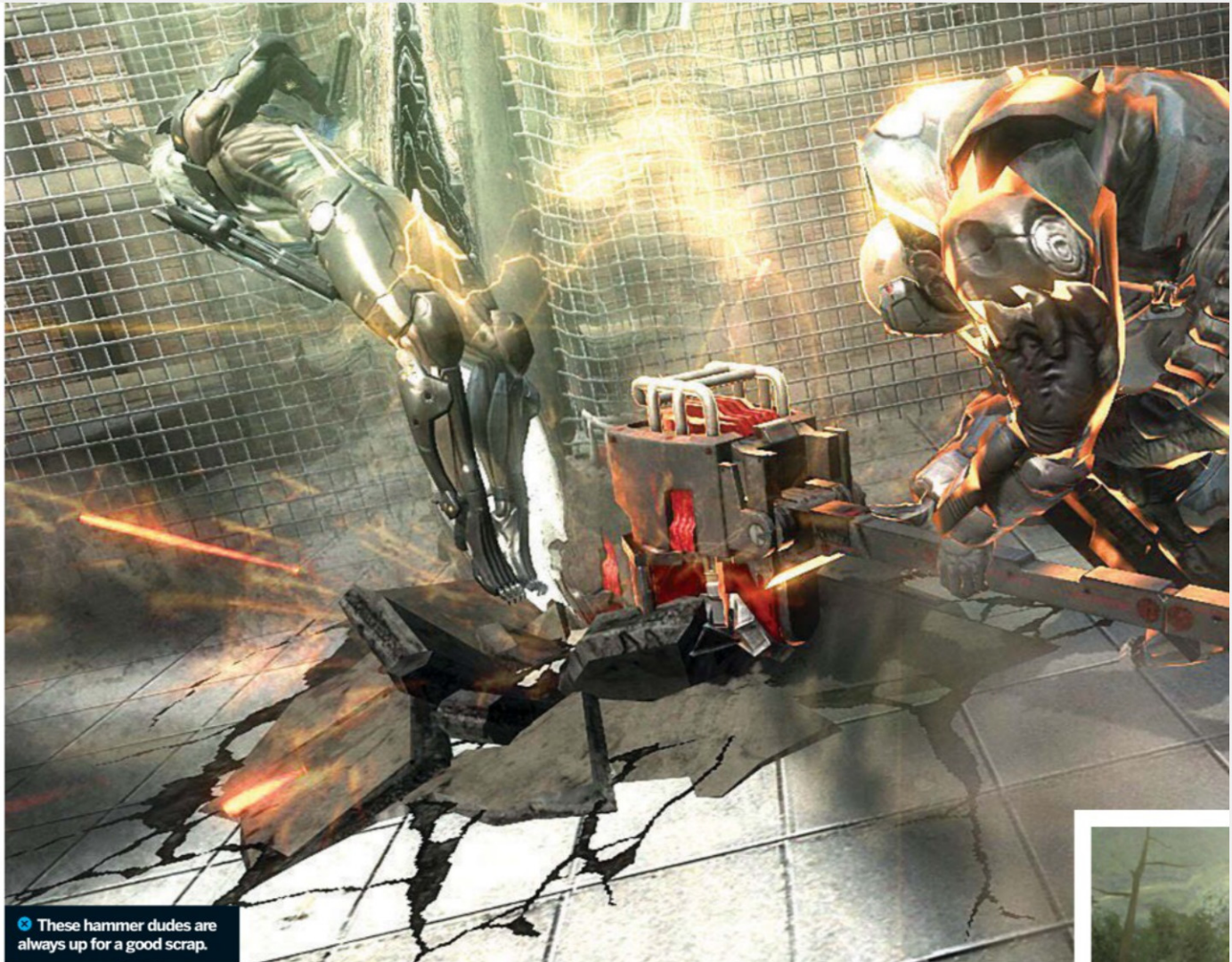


In fact, satisfying is probably the best word to describe all of *Metal Gear Rising's* combat. Unlike almost any other entrant in this genre you care to think of, Raiden is not a counter-fighter. He doesn't lay in wait like Ryu Hayabusa, or slip-and-rip like *Bayonetta*. He attacks. Constantly. Relentlessly. There is no block button in *Metal Gear Rising*, and until you go out of your way to buy it in the upgrade menu, there is no dodge. There is, quite simply, only a parry. To execute this parry, you have to press the stick in the direction of your opponent and hit the light attack button as they're hitting you. At first, it's an utterly alien feeling.

We're so used to hiding in our defensive shells in these sorts of games that the idea of using offence to defend is almost terrifying. Raiden doesn't fight with lateral movement, though, he attacks in blitzes, charging through his opponents' assaults, swatting them out of the way until he can sink his blade into their metallic flesh.

Enemies signify their attacks with a red cross – like a reflection from a car brake light – and it's up to you to time your parry to stop them. It's possible to spam the button somewhat and block the strike, but time it perfectly and you'll be able to immediately set up a riposte and often decimate your foe in seconds. Do that to three or four enemies in a row, and not only will you feel like the hardest➤





These hammer dudes are always up for a good scrap.

> person to have ever walked the earth, you'll likely be rewarded with one of those elusive S ranks.

Despite the wide range of enemies, Raiden's ability to destroy rarely falters. Whether you're battling cyber soldiers, Gekkos, wolf robot things or even giant Metal Gears, you can always do damage with your sword, and there will always be an opportunity to slice and dice in free blade mode. This consistency frees up the combat system to concentrate on millisecond timing and devastating accuracy.

Being a Platinum game, too, there's a tidy arsenal of secondary weapons that exponentially increase your attacking potential. For starters, Raiden can pick up rocket launchers and grenades on the battlefield and use them just like Solid Snake would, although their actual usefulness is limited. Better, though, are the weapons you collect from the game's startlingly brilliant boss battles.

There are four key encounters throughout the campaign that award you a new weapon, and while we won't spoil the specifics, we will talk you through some of the gear. The first is a pole, made up from the arms of dwarf gekkos,



We'll be honest, there's a little part of us that still enjoys watching Raiden get hurt.

that acts as you might expect. You turn into some sort of cross between a helicopter blade and Kilik from *Soul Calibur*, basically. Beyond that, there's a heavy two-handed sword that feels exactly as you'd imagine, and a tactical sai that doubles up as a *DmC*-style whip, so you can pull yourself into distant opponents to set up attacks.

You don't get to switch between these weapons on the fly, so it's best to concentrate on one that you enjoy and level it up throughout your playthrough. The actual boss fights where you win them, though, are magical. This genre has been blighted with glowing hit-point powered nonsense forever, and Platinum is quite simply not interested in any of that rubbish.

These are fights against enemies the same size of you and with equal levels of skill. To succeed, you need to concentrate, react and attack with unprecedented aggression and tact. One fight, in fact, could be the best boss battle of all time, from a purely mechanical point of view. And the beauty of them is that

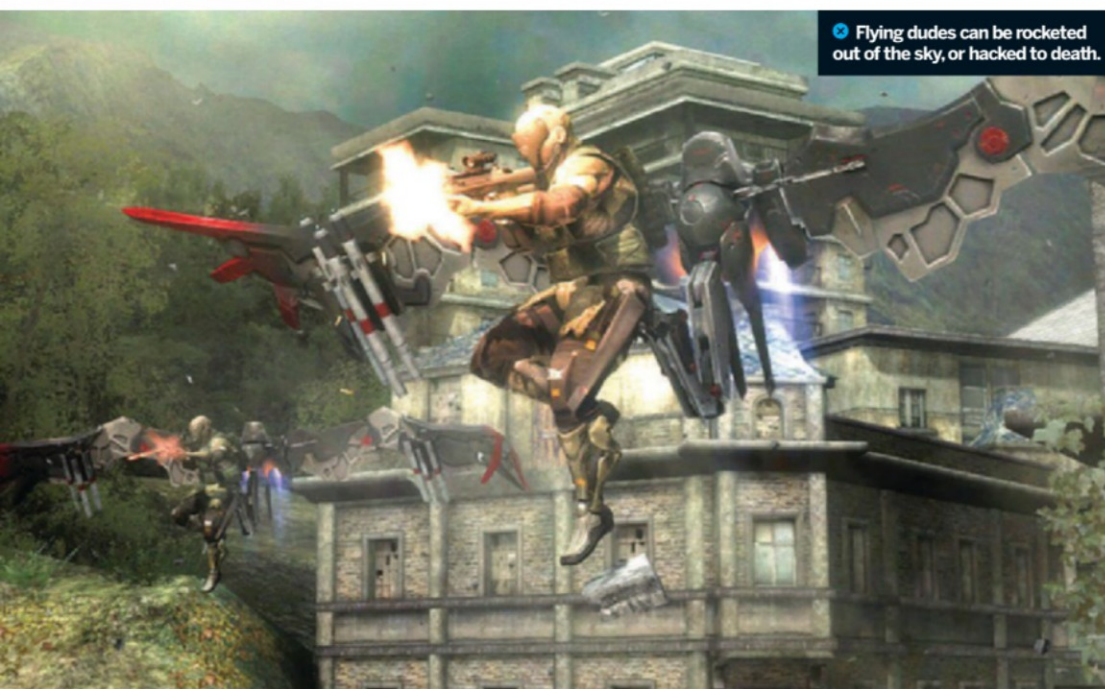
you could play them all and not even work out which one we mean.

So good are they, that it comes as quite a shock that the final battle is a bit of a letdown. It's not a disaster by any means, but lacks the fine-tuned mastery of the other scraps. In a game that's so well-balanced, it's a shame that it finishes in a furnace of frustration. Perhaps he'll make more sense on our second and third playthroughs.

Another aspect that doesn't make much sense is the game's fondness for stealth. Being a *Metal Gear* game, it's fantastic to see question marks appearing over enemies heads, that familiar orchestral stab when they see you, and even a cardboard box to hide in. You can sneak up on enemies and slash them from behind, and the freedom of movement Raiden has means that it's never slow. However, stealth is so antithetical to everything the game achieves that it seems mightily strange that the boys and girls at the other end of the codec are constantly encouraging you to either sneak by enemies



Inside, this guy's absolutely terrified.



Flying dudes can be rocketed out of the sky, or hacked to death.

or take them out unseen. Across the board, it's more fun to just charge in and kick arse. Perhaps it's a narrative pull to make Raiden seem more rebellious, or perhaps it's just a dissonance in tone.

Thankfully, you're never, ever punished for going loud, and the game never makes it too difficult to do so. There's actually some fun to be had stealthing, too – even the larger enemies can be silently assassinated, and you can quickly switch to blade mode and hack them to shreds just as you would in a normal battle.

It's a strangely inconsistent style, though. Atsushi Inaba, the game's producer (and the man behind *Okami* among many other masterpieces) has defended the stealth by saying the game would be boring without it. He is very, very wrong. This is combat of the highest order, and we think he knows it. This feels like pandering to the fans of the series. Thankfully it doesn't spoil a thing.

One fight, in fact, could be the best boss battle of all time

Much like the wildly inconsistent environments.

The game always

looks great up close, and Raiden moves and attacks with beauty, but some of the places you fight through look like they've been knocked up in twenty minutes. An entire mission takes place in a sewer with repeating textures, and another in an airfield where every building is the same. Presumably, a combination of time and budgetary constraints has led to this blandness, as there are sections which look fantastic and full of imagination. Compared to something as blisteringly imaginative as *Bayonetta*, or the constantly astonishing *DmC*, it does look bloody awful at times. Ultimately, though, the combat is so good that you could set the game in a white box and it wouldn't matter.

In fact, that actually happens. Or a yellow box at least. There are over twenty VR missions to unlock throughout the campaign, and they distill the game's stunning action down to its purest parts without any worries

Ⓜ Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance



RAIDEN VS DANTE. FIGHT!

The two emoest emos in the world go to war

REVENGEANCE

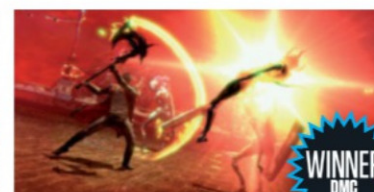
DEVIL MAY CRY



WINNER
MGR

ROUND 1: COMBAT

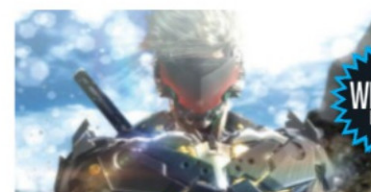
Clearly the most important aspect of either game, and one hell of a tussle. *DmC* has more options and flexibility in its brawling, but the 60fps precision of *Rising*'s swordplay is just so bloodily moreish. They're both fantastic, but the fact Raiden's constant forward motion feels like nothing else means he just nabs the victory.



WINNER
DMC

ROUND 2: STORY

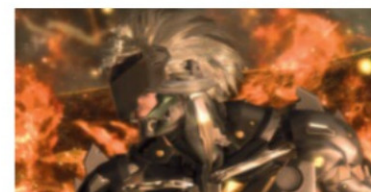
The quality of the acting and writing in *DmC* is some distance ahead of *Rising*, but there's still an entertaining yarn spun throughout Platinum's riot. It's less talky than a typical *Metal Gear* game, still filled with long soliloquies about the nature of war and all that noise, but the characters are likeable and there are some marvellous cutscenes. *DmC* is just too strong, through.



WINNER
DRAW

ROUND 3: LEAD CHARACTER

Again, a tough call. *DmC*'s Dante has taken a lot of flack from the internet, but he's actually a pretty likeable dude – cocky, but with heart and an increasing sense of responsibility. Raiden's a far cry from the wet blanket he once was, but his weird voice means he loses points. It's got to be a draw.



WINNER
DMC

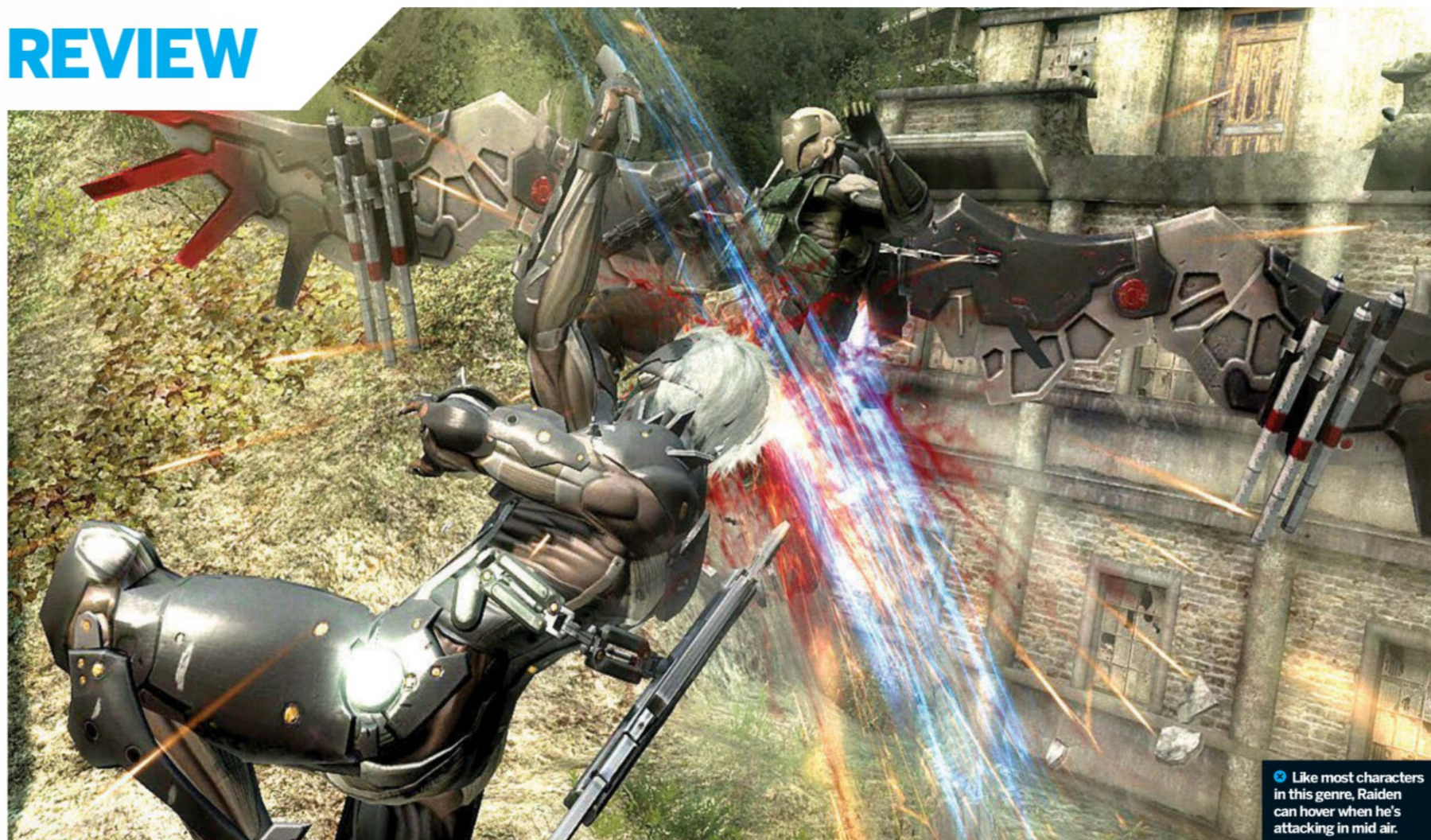
ROUND 4: VALUE

The VR Missions in *MGR* are great, but the lack of proper new game plus options is a shame (remixed enemies, etc), and the game is rather short. It features some of the best battles in the genre's history, but there's so many facets to *DmC*'s replayability that it has to win. This is game with online leaderboards, multiple post-completion difficulty modes, and multiple secrets that are only discoverable on subsequent playthroughs.

OVERALL WINNER: DMC

So Dante just about takes it, but it's important to remember he did lose in the most important category. Ultimately, the beginning of 2013 has been phenomenal for a genre that's truly coming into its own, and these two games are absolutely complementary.



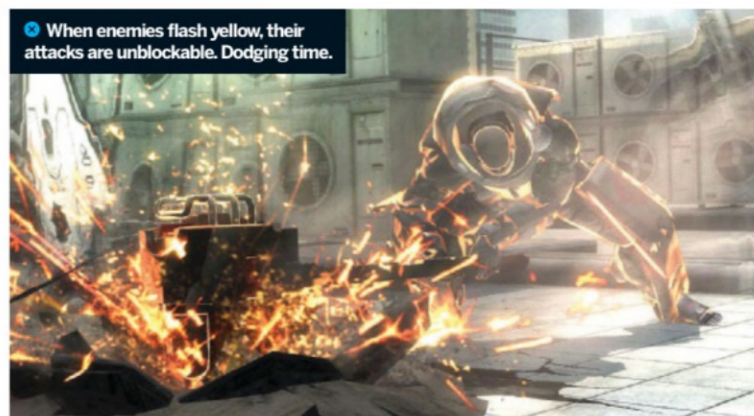


Like most characters in this genre, Raiden can hover when he's attacking in mid air.

Remember when everyone hated Raiden? How times have changed.



When enemies flash yellow, their attacks are unblockable. Dodging time.



about backgrounds or buildings. The enemy design is brilliant, and the animation and kinetic charge of the gameplay easily makes up for any starkness in the backgrounds. And we're not talking *God Hand* levels of ropeyness here, just not the type of thing you typically see in triple-A gaming.

The real beauty of *Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance*, though, lies not in its looks but in its feel. Platinum (and Clover before it) has always excelled at making its games 'feel' good – even the sketchy *Anarchy Reigns* absolutely nails the crunch of smacking someone in the chops. In *Metal Gear Rising* you feel sharp and deadly and lightning-quick. The first playthrough feels like a warm-up, too, mere preparation for a run on Hard and eventually *Revengeance* modes.

It has to be noted, though, that *Rising* is not a long game. Our 'normal' playthrough clocked in at five and a half hours, which you can add 90 minutes of restarts to. Skip the cutscenes, though, and you can probably take them back off. And those cutscenes might be a bit much for people who are more used to action games than *Metal Gear*. It's not as chatty as a Kojima game, but there are some truly awful

actors tearing it up in there, and some lengthy talks about weird subjects. If you're into that world, you'll probably enjoy it as much as we didn't, but be warned, if you just want action, you might be diving for the skip function with serious regularity.

For those prepared to look, though, the game is rammed with the types of gags, in-jokes and references that have always defined this series. Platinum has masterfully combined the *MGS* world, with its melons, codec chirps and porn mags with its own burgeoning universe. There are subtle references to *Bayonetta*, *Okami*, *Viewtiful Joe*, *Godhand* and even *Anarchy Reigns* in here, and a whole character who is pretty much a lift from *Vanquish*. Fan service doesn't even cover it.

And it's that commitment to its fans that really defines PlatinumGames. This is a team that has already shown its mastery and innovation within this genre, and once again it has hit a home run. *Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance* is a true beast, a 60fps (bar the occasional dip) warrior that manages to straddle the line between its own genre and the lore of a beloved series with the sharpness of Raiden's blade. This genre has changed, and Platinum is its master.

Jon Denton

VERDICT

It might not quite have the imagination of *DmC*, but *Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance* is another world-class entry in gaming's most fundamentally playable genre. The combat is flawless, the story bonkers and the bosses some of the finest in gaming history.

91%



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RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Dead Space 3

Lost on a planet



When it comes to success stories of the current generation, *Dead Space* stands tall. Starting out as an unknown new IP, albeit one with the financial power of EA behind it, the game was a big hit and saw a sequel that was similarly well received. A third game was a given, promising more scares, more action, and even deader space.

Unassuming engineer turned action superhero Isaac Clarke returns to face yet another slew of Necromorph outbreaks. Again? The dude has the worst luck, huh? At the start of the game, Isaac is being grumpy in his apartment, looking morose and sweeping things off desks in a display of his oh-so-tortured soul. He's kicked out of his funk by the stereotypical army bros kicking in his door, and soon enough he's back to his limb-severing best.

Isaac as a character is more assured than he was in 2. His sanity, so often called into question before, isn't an issue, and aside from the odd angsty outburst, he tends to take control of the situation, in part due to the lack of competence from the gibbering cretins that make up most of the supporting cast. From his mute spell in the first game to his mental struggles into the second, Isaac has grown into an interesting character, different enough to the standard space-marine archetype to stand out and be endearing. You'll root for him as he struggles to survive and save the world yet again, and this time, he has help.

The big new feature of *Dead Space 3* is co-op. That's right, co-op, which has been in



DETAILS

Publisher
EA
Developer
Visceral Games
Price
£49.99
Players
1-2
Genre
Survival horror
Age Rating
18
Website
www.deadspace.com
Twitter
@VisceralGames
Facebook
facebook.com/Visceral-Games



Tentacle trouble.

almost every game released in the last five years, is the major selling point in all the game's marketing campaigns. Player 2 controls John Carver, one of the standard army guys from earlier, who has a similarly tortured soul thanks to losing his wife and son in a prior Necromorph outbreak. It's hard to care about Carver thanks to the utter lack of originality. This is a character you've seen before in plenty of other games. Even his name is boring.

Fans have been understandably worried about this. Horror games live and die on their atmosphere, and the best way to ruin any sense of fear is by having another person with you, as *Resident Evil* has proven.

Visceral has solved this problem in a smart way. In single player, Isaac is still almost

The thing is, even on your lonesome, *Dead Space* has never actually been that scary

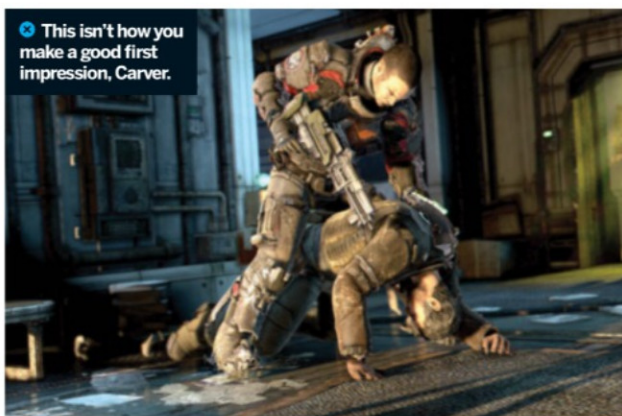
always alone. Although Carver is still around in cutscenes, he is far less of an important character, with the story subtly changing depending on whether you are playing solo or not. The amount of increasingly contrived ways that Isaac gets split up from the group starts to get a bit silly, but if you want your single-player, lonely *Dead Space* experience, it's still here.

But the thing is, even on your lonesome, *Dead Space* has never actually been that deep-down emotionally scary. If monsters jumping out of airvents, screaming BLAUGAHGAG and walking slowly towards you still scares you witless, then good for you, but that's the sort of scare that only works the first time, and never when you've got plenty of ammo. Isaac has always been so well-armed that you rarely feel helpless. "But wait!" you cry. "On the harder difficulty levels, resources are far more scarce!" It's true, and the harder difficulty you play on, the more survival-horror-esque the game becomes in regards to inventory management and being careful with your stuff, but it still isn't scary. Having no ammo or health packs doesn't make a game horrific, it makes it annoying.

The best scary games work on a dark, psychological level, implying horror rather than



This guy is a bit of a dick. But at least he has a lovely English accent.



This isn't how you make a good first impression, Carver.

Or you could try



Resident Evil 6 Issue 223
Not scary either, but still a zombie-shooting good time. **88%**



outright shoving it in your face. They let your imagination do the work, stirring up true terror through subtlety. *Dead Space* isn't subtle. It shoves it in your face, then screams "THIS IS SCARY, ISN'T IT? BE SCARED!" in your ear just to make sure the message is getting across.

Another holdout from the survival-horror games of yore is Isaac's cumbersome movement. He still feels sluggish, and getting caught in a corner with a bunch of enemies and no means of escaping raises a sigh. New to *Dead Space 3* is the ability to roll, supposedly to avoid attacks. In practice, it just doesn't bloody work. Attempting a timely roll to dodge an attack will almost always result in Isaac being hit anyway. One recurring boss fight in particular comes to mind, where the intention is clearly for the player to roll to the side when the boss charges at him. Yet every time you get hit, resulting in much annoyance and a strategy that involves a lot of legging it and very little shooting.

The second addition to Isaac and Carver's moveset is a cover system. Astute minds might wonder why a game in which the player faces primarily rage-filled melee-based enemies would need cover, and rightly so. Thanks to the Hollywood Blockbuster Syndrome that seems to infect every horror franchise as they grow (cough *Resident Evil* cough), *Dead Space 3* features human enemies as well as the trusty Necromorphs. >



GUNS? YES, WE HAVE GUNS

Several, to be precise. Like, bloody loads

Making your own instruments of death is the best new thing about *Dead Space 3*, and some of the stuff you can make is awesome. One favourite in the **Play** offices was a combination of a pulse rifle and a rocket launcher. Pretty standard, you may think, but with an upgrade module that gives every shot stasis, everything changes. Rockets become stasis bombs, everything in their blast radius getting frozen in time. Amusingly, this also includes Isaac if he isn't careful with where he's aiming. More than once we fired at an enemy too nearby only for Isaac to fly backwards from the blast, *really* slowly. We couldn't help but laugh. Other great inventions included a pyro-infused shredder, firing out fiery metal blades of death, with a plasma blade attached to the bottom for when things get too close for comfort. Or how about Isaac's traditional line-cutter, upgraded with damage chips and a rapid-fire module to create a speedy dismemberment machine of few equal. Every combination of guns has its own unique model, which is a great touch that shows the amount of effort put in. Good to see Isaac finally putting that engineering degree to some use, eh?

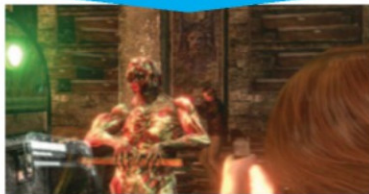
REVIEW

RESI 6 VS DEAD SPACE 3

Zombies vs. Necromorphs. Whoever wins, it smells bad!

RESIDENT EVIL 6

DEAD SPACE 3



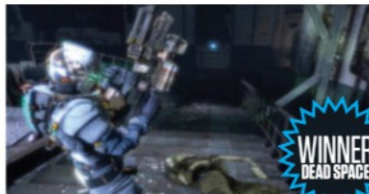
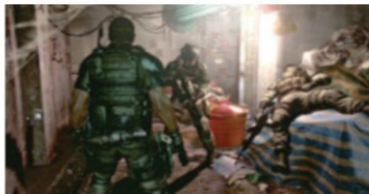
ROUND 1: SCARES

Both are about as scary as a sunny day, with strong focuses on action over atmosphere, but at least *Dead Space 3* tries a bit. *Resi 6* abandons any pretence at horror with its mental action hero story, while *Dead Space* does ease up occasionally and try to do a horror bit.



ROUND 2: CHARACTERS

Isaac is a cool dude, but the rest of his gang are so dull we can barely remember them. *Resi 6* has bonafide gaming heroes Chris Redfield and Leon Kennedy, plus the return of Sherry Birkin and new badasses Jake Muller and Piers Nivans. Easy win.



ROUND 3: GUNS

Resi 6 has some great weapons, with the series staple magnum and Piers' enormous sniper rifle coming to mind. But *Dead Space 3* lets you make your own two-in-one guns with a huge amount of depth and customisation. If you can dream it, you can probably build it.



ROUND 4: GRAPHICS

Dead Space 3 looks really nice at some points but a bit ropey in others. *Resi 6* is pretty stunning throughout, with a massive variety of environments from the sleepy American suburb to an infected Hong Kong city. Character models are also far superior.



ROUND 5: FUN

The intangible decider. Both games have their moments, but *Resident Evil 6* is more consistently entertaining with its over-the-top, cartoony feel, satisfying combat and badass melee attacks. Plus, Mercenaries mode is almost worth the money alone.



> These sections are just awful. Isaac's moveset doesn't suit a fast-paced shooter and it shows. The cover system is extremely simple. Aim your gun while standing near a piece of customary chest-high wall and Isaac will crouch down a bit. That's it. Despite your head and a large part of your torso still being visible, taking cover renders you near-immune to gunfire and makes these sections far too easy.

Towards the end of the game, human and Necromorph opponents are mixed, fighting each other as well as you. It's here that it really works. Having to gauge the battlefield and adapt to different types of attacks on the fly is thrilling fun, and it's always enjoyable helping some enemy soldiers take out a huge monster, only to finish them off when they are distracted.

Many old types of Necromorphs return, along with various new monsters like the morphing Waster, mutating depending on where you shoot it. It's pretty impressive, despite being exactly the same idea as the J'avo from *Resident Evil 6* last year. Huge boss monsters are suitably slimy and tentacled, and the sound design is as spot on as ever. Growls, roars, high-pitched shrieks and human-like cries of pain – the Necromorphs are a noisy bunch. They all look wonderfully grotesque and, although not that horrific, it's still easy to appreciate the gruesome designs.

Aside from the story differences, there are other subtle changes when playing in co-op. Thanks to the signals being sent out by the Markers and his general ill mental health, Carver suffers from bouts of dementia. This causes him to see things that Isaac doesn't, while inhabiting the same space. Think of the much-applauded phasing feature in *World Of Warcraft*. Two players, standing in the same spot in the same shared world, each seeing two completely different things but still able to interact with each other. It's a neat system that more games should use, and gives players a reason to try out Carver to see through his eyes.

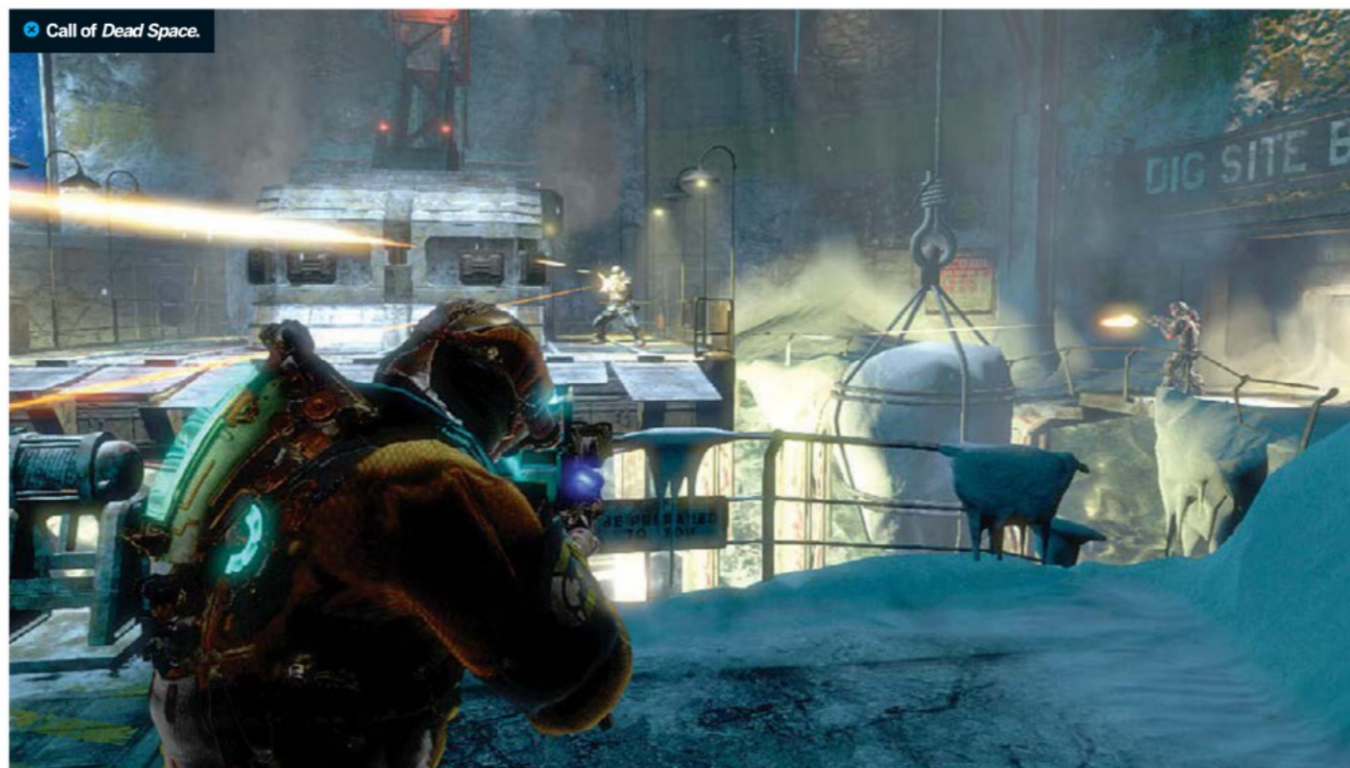


This is the part where we would talk about how different it is playing in co-op, the changes in tone, how the two characters work together, and if the game still works when playing with a friend. Unfortunately, the review code we received from EA couldn't connect to online

Weapon crafting is a total hit and the most welcome addition to the *Dead Space* formula

co-op, so we haven't been able to test it on this occasion. Keep an eye on **Play**, though, as we'll be taking a look at it next issue.

The second big new feature is the weapon crafting system. This adds an RPG spin to the game, with Isaac collecting various materials as he progresses that go towards making shiny new guns. The system shows a surprising level of depth and is one of the best things about the game. Each weapon can have two guns in one – you can strap an assault rifle to a rocket launcher, or Isaac's trademark plasma cutter to a hydraulic hammer. To these two base guns you can add attachments, upgrade



chips and various other miscellanea to create a truly unique weapon. There are thousands of combinations and each has its own model in game. It's thoroughly impressive, and coming up with your own personal death-machine is a blast. Some of the stuff you can come up with is downright nasty. Want to add a stasis effect to every bullet your shredder/grenade launcher hybrid fires? Yeah, you can do that.

You may well create a weapon so powerful and awesome that you simply don't need to bother making new ones, but even that isn't much of a complaint. Weapon crafting is a total hit and the most welcome addition to the *Dead Space* formula.

Unfortunately, it's in the resource gathering aspect of making weapons and upgrading your suit that one of the unwelcome spectres of this generation invades the series. An option for Downloadable Content is always present on the crafting screens, and micro-transactions allow you to buy extra materials if you find yourself lacking. It's never a necessity as there's plenty of stuff to find, but it still feels like an unwelcome intrusion, and if we're being cynical, rather like EA is pushing >



BOOTS OF STEEL

Don't let him step all over you

Seriously, are Isaac's feet made of lead or something? When this guy steps on something, it freaking dies. Corpses can be stomped on to reveal lovely items, rending them into bloody giblets, splitting apart at the merest touch of Isaac's ten-tonne toes. A standard melee punch is available too for enemies that invade your personal space, but doesn't seem to pack anywhere near as much power. Melee attachments for guns such as pneumatic hammers are great fun, but nothing compares to the absurd power of the man's feet. As seminal Nineties pop band Steps once sang, Stomp Stomp Stomp!





> microtransactions a little too much. This isn't iOS, after all.

Otherwise, core gameplay is business as usual. It's practically the same as the last two games, but an old mantra about not fixing unbroken things comes to mind. Aside from Isaac's clunky movement, the shooting mechanics are satisfying and stomping on stuff is still as meaty as before. You all know the drill. Stroll around, shoot monsters, stomp on boxes, mash X to pick stuff up as you walk over it. It's just a shame that it never amounts to more – it still works, but we've been doing rather similar things now for two prior games.

Dead Space 3 is interesting graphically, but also a decent metaphor for the game as a whole. It looks alright throughout, really lovely in some places, but for the most part is so standard it's hard to get excited about. Character faces are a bit iffy; okay from a distance but get up close and you notice things like the weird ears (trust us) that can

be off-putting. Some of the environment design is stunning with wonderful vistas setting the scene. Vast swathes of space filled with destroyed ships and sprawling, densely-populated lunar colonies take the breath away. On a smaller level though, design is dull and repetitive. Once you've seen a few dark corridors and nondescript snowy plains you know what to expect.

The theme of slight disappointment continues with the story, which is so unoriginal it's often hard to care. Isaac is a compelling character, and Ellie Langford, returning from the last game, is interesting, but Carver is a cliché and the supporting cast are barely more than cardboard cutouts who exist to be killed off in a variety of fun ways. The plot is a mishmash of *Aliens* and the whole "ancient creators" shtick that seems to be increasingly prevalent in modern media, *Assassin's Creed* for example, with a good bit of unsubtle social commentary on religious fanaticism thrown in.

Isaac and crew travel to another planet, thinking it to be the homeworld of the mysterious "markers" that cause all the Necromorph nastiness, in an attempt to save humanity. Along the way they are accosted by the Church of Unitology, worshippers of the markers who see Isaac as a big threat in accomplishing their goals. Their leader is English, because he's evil. Or is he evil because he's English?

The plot is utterly awash with macguffins and barely explained lingo – Black Markers, Red Markers, Machines, Convergence, Pandora, Codex's, jam donuts. There is always some all-important item for the group to attain which will open access to the next plot device, and so on. Supposedly important plot



Hey look, up in the sky! Is it a bird? No, it's a Necromorph and it wants to kill you.

revelations are clumsily handled, failing to make much of an impact because you aren't really sure what's going on.

When the plot works is when it ditches all the high-concept jargon and focuses on the human element. Isaac is a likeable, interesting character and seeing him struggle with a huge responsibility he doesn't want, coming to terms with it and growing into his role as a hero is good stuff. It's about as original as the rest of the story, but because you've come to care about Isaac over his long, improbable journey, you don't mind as much. As the story builds to a suitably epic conclusion, you'll start to care about Isaac's ultimate fate as he struggles to save the world, despite knowing that really, it's all a bit silly.

Padding is an issue. Key plot points are few and far between, with the large gaps being filled by Isaac going on yet another wild goose chase as he searches for the next item he needs. Find that item, and guess what, it's broken. You need to get two more items to fix the first one. But then, one of those doesn't work either! Isaac has to fix the electrical system first. And so on, until it gets tiresome. Most games, at a base level, are at least in part about walking to where you are told, but *Dead Space 3* rarely gives you a reason to be interested in where you are walking to and why. Samey environments and dull puzzles drag the game to an utter halt at times, and boredom can't help but creep in.

Several optional missions are included, including some specific to co-op. Getting more bang for your buck is always good, but it's easy to see why these missions are optional. Less effort has been given to them compared to the main game, with a few lines of dialogue setting

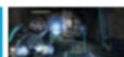


Dead Space still has the capacity for creepy creature designs.



We don't want to know what these tentacles are attached to.

Previously...
in Play



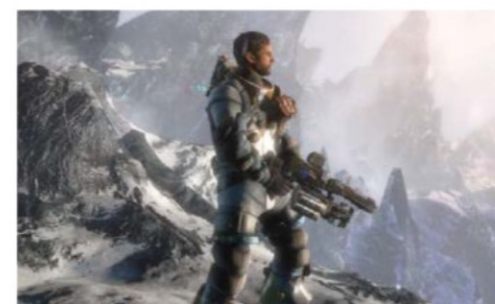
Issue 227
"Dead Space 3's currency is atmosphere. It lives it, it breathes it, and it bathes in it."



ALL ON MY LONESOME

Seriously, what are the odds?

In the interests of keeping Isaac (and Carver, in co-op) split up from the rest of the group, Visceral go to some really convoluted lengths. Oh hey, the bridge broke just before Isaac could cross! Oh hey, the big monster knocked Isaac off a cliff just before he could join the others! Oh hey, Isaac saw a penny on the floor and by the time he picked it up everyone else had gone on ahead! We aren't really complaining, it's just amusing to see all the ways Isaac gets split up from everyone... again.



you on your way and little else. Most end up with Isaac discovering some goodies that often weren't quite worth the items he used getting to that point. Visceral made the right move making this stuff optional, and it's appreciated. Completionists have extra content to enjoy, but those who want to power through the story can avoid some of the extra chaff.

Speaking of chaff, the competitive multiplayer modes from *Dead Space 2* have been cut, Visceral focusing their online efforts on co-op. It's not a huge loss. Multiplayer was a fun little piss-about every now and then, but never the main attraction. A few players might miss it, but most probably won't even notice. What it all comes down to is simple. *Dead Space 3* is more of the same, albeit a tad more action-focused and with more snow.

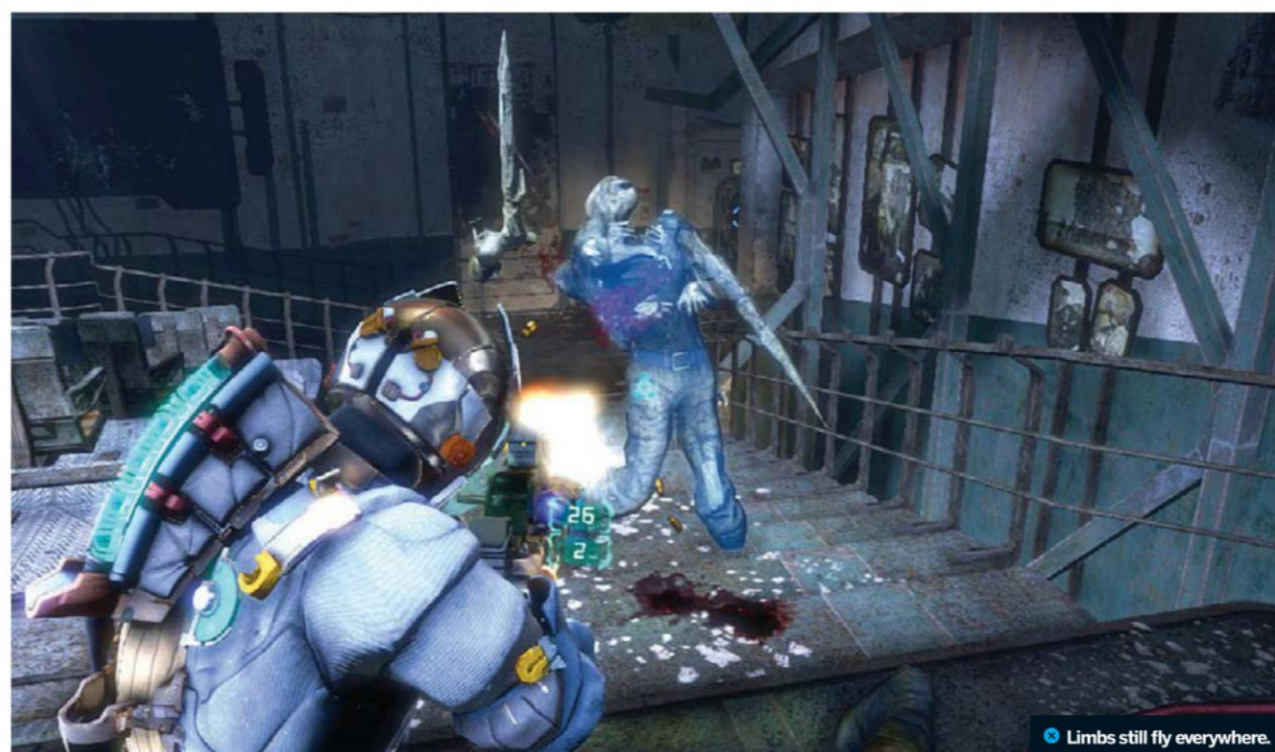
Diehard fans of the previous two games will have just as much fun this time around, assuming they aren't expecting broad innovations. Everything is polished and this is clearly a title with a lot of funding behind it, but all the money in the world can't buy innovation. By no means a bad sequel, it doesn't quite offer a way for *Dead Space* to evolve as a series beyond its past two instalments, even if the formula here is still potent.

Sam Smith

VERDICT

Professionally made and nicely polished, *Dead Space 3* doesn't quite take enough design risks to be the thrilling trilogy-ender we were hoping for from Visceral's action-horror series. Still very fun for the most part, though.

70%



Limbs still fly everywhere.



Hah, funny arms.

RELEASE DATE: 22 FEBRUARY

Persona 4: Golden

Going to school has never been so much fun



For a machine with 'no' games available for it, the Vita has a staggering amount of great titles. Sure the release dates are patchy, but when many games hit, and a lot have already, it's hard to argue with their quality.

Take *Persona 4: Golden*, for example. Originally planned as a PSP game by developer Atlus, the Tokyo-based developer soon saw the error of its ways, and released it for the far more capable PS Vita. It was rewarded with exceptionally good sales in Japan, and if there's any justice in the world, the same thing will happen in the West.

Persona 4: Golden follows the templates of previous *Persona* games, but adds more than enough new mechanics – particularly during combat – to make it the definitive game in the series. This is most notable in the story, which deals with your character moving to a small town, where a number of strange murders are being committed. Without giving too much away, you discover that there is an alternate

world, which brings out all the dark desires of whoever goes there. A clever killer is pushing people into this world via TVs and then letting their dark sides kill them, creating the almost perfect crime.

You catch wind of these dark shenanigans and soon go about rescuing targets, who in turn join your party upon rescue. It's a long twisting story to be sure, but it's filled with snappy dialogue, plenty of humour and some pleasingly deep characters.

Well-written characters are essential to *Persona 4*'s success as you'll need to build relationships, called Social Links, with many of them to power your Personas (the strange avatars in the other world that are the main source of your powers). More great dialogue comes out as you start interacting with your peers – your cousin Nanako's is particularly good, dealing with death, loss and isolation – and it's possible for some relationships to go beyond being just friends. This takes time though, and time is one thing that you'll



DETAILS

Publisher
Reef Entertainment/
NIS America
Developer
Atlus
Price
£34.99
Players
1
Genre
RPG
Age Rating
17+
Website
[www.atlus.com/p4g/
home.html](http://www.atlus.com/p4g/home.html)
Twitter
@ReefEntertain
Facebook
[facebook.com/
ReefGames](https://www.facebook.com/ReefGames)

find yourself managing furiously throughout *Persona 4*'s lengthy play time as you build the five key traits that fuel the narration.

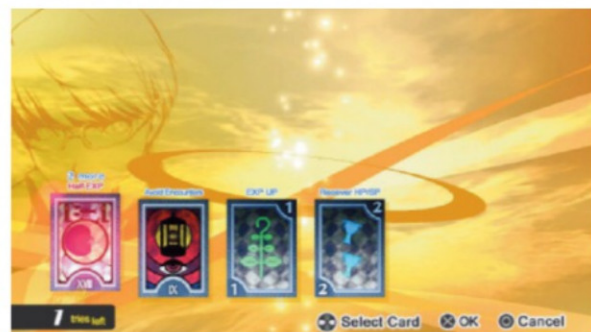
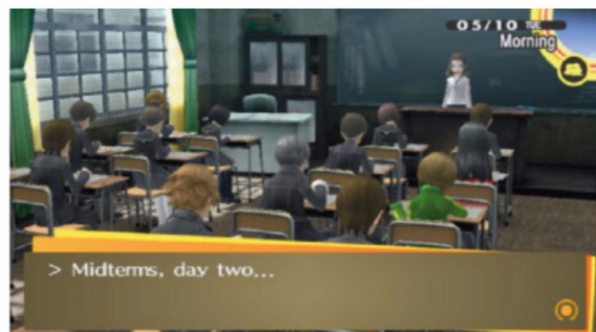
In *Persona*, while you're battling weirdly outlandish monsters, you're also battling the peer pressure that any young teenager has to go through. As a result, making friends at school, finding sports and clubs to fit into, juggling odd jobs and doing chores are just a few of the things you need to master. You'll be attending school most days and then you'll typically have afternoons and evenings to plan your hectic schedule. It's a clever mechanic, because you'll never be able to excel at everything, so your best bet is to make your character as balanced as possible. Things become tougher however when school tests crop up, certain characters want to double book your precious time or you simply want to build up your character by entering the TV and gaining new levels.

This intricate balancing act has always played a large part in past games in the *Persona* franchise and it's no different here. It becomes even more hectic than before, as *Persona 4: Golden* delivers new areas once you acquire a motorcycle licence, allowing you to visit things like cinemas, which can further build your relationships and subsequently enhance your Personas. For all its time-management and dating aspects – which are highly enjoyable – *Persona* is also about combat, and Atlus has continued to build on the franchise's popular mechanics. It's possible to customise your Personas as they gain more skills, while characters no longer lose a turn if they're knocked down. The 'Once More' combat also returns, where you'll earn an additional attack if you strike out at an enemy's elemental weakness. Although this in turn can be used against you.

Personas, like Pokémon, have a variety of elemental strengths and weaknesses, which



Receiving something of an upgrade, you'll find *P4G* on the Vita, and not the PSP as was planned.



PORTABLE IMPROVEMENTS

What Golden offers over the PS2 game

ATLUS HAS ADDED numerous enhancements to this PS Vita port. It's now possible to visit new locations, although you'll need a motorcycle first. There's also additional dialogue, which wasn't in the original game, and some interesting online functions like sharing your progress with other players. The shuffle mini-game that appeared at the end of battles has also been greatly improved, as have the fishing mechanics, while the story itself is far longer than the original game and offers better foreshadowing of events. There's also Marie, a brand new character found in the Velvet Room who introduces a new social link and has her own interesting back story.

can help or hinder you in battle, and they unlock more skills as you level up, or build relationships outside of combat. Add in the fact that Personas can also be combined in the Velvet Room (a mysterious location you'll constantly revisit throughout your journey) to create new ones, and the depth of Atlus's game becomes readily apparent. There are a total of eight characters to unlock and all of them play significantly different to each other, but you can only take three with you when you go exploring dungeons, so you're back to making those difficult choices again.

Persona 4: Golden may be a remake, but it's a remake of arguably one of the best RPGs for some time. Enhanced with crisp new visuals, greatly lengthened dialogue and a brand new character (the mysterious Marie) it's a superb game, with bite-sized gameplay that's perfectly suited to gaming on the go. If you love games, you need to experience this delightful gem, it's really that simple.

Darran Jones

VERDICT

Persona 4: Golden is one of the best RPGs around, with great characterisation, a gripping story and smart combat mechanics that greatly improve on the formula found in past *Persona* games. It's an essential purchase for anyone that owns Sony's portable handheld.

94%



REVIEW

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Retro City Rampage

Back to the future



If you're under 20, *Retro City Rampage* is probably not the game for you. So entrenched is this lovingly built homage to all things Eighties that its relentless references, in-jokes and gags will likely be lost on today's youngsters, and they'll be left with a rather unimpressive top-down open world game that looks like it's been programmed on an underpowered TV remote.

For the rest of us, though, the onslaught of nostalgia is quite a powerful tool. At its heart, *Retro City Rampage* actually plays closer to one of the darlings of the Nineties – the original *Grand Theft Auto* – but its 8-bit visuals, garish colours and crispy chip-tune soundtrack feel like they've been lifted from the chipboard of a NES cartridge.

You play as a generic tough and rough around the edges gangster type, and quickly fall in with The Doc (Doc Brown from *Back To The Future*, basically) who demands that you find parts of a time machine for some reason that gets lost almost immediately. In truth, this is just an excuse to ram as many Eighties gaming, movie and pop culture references down your throat as possible, and as quickly as possible.

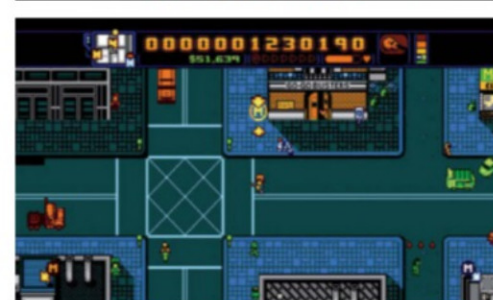
For the first hour or so, the pace is absolutely frenetic, and the volume of gags almost unbelievable. So much so, that it almost becomes the game's aesthetic – even though you're fundamentally carrying out menial tasks, the style and subject matter changes so rapidly that it never quite feels like the games it is so fondly aping.

After a while, though, the pace slows, and *Retro City Rampage* falls back on the darker side of parody. Much like the long forgotten *Simpsons* game, there are plenty of in-jokes aimed at long time gamers, like the one about how it's boring to have to tail a car around the city, or to do odd jobs for random mission givers. It's all very well poking fun at that fact, but when you're asked to then do it anyway, it just feels a little lazy.



DETAILS

Publisher
VBlank
Developer
Brian Provinciano
Price
\$14.99
Players
1
Genre
Open World
Age Rating
12+
Website
www.retrocityrampage.com
Twitter
@retroCR
Facebook
[facebook.com/retrocityrampage](https://www.facebook.com/retrocityrampage)



If you stick to shorter play sessions, and make sure you keep up with all of the gags, there's still plenty to love here though. Its imperfect and occasionally almightily frustrating, but that's probably the point. If you're a gamer of a certain age, you're going to get a kick out of *Retro City Rampage*.

Jon Denton

VERDICT

The passion is clear, the charm magnetic and the gameplay enjoyable, but *Retro City Rampage* does fall back on weak gags a little too often to achieve greatness. Still a cracking idea that'll make any older gamer beam.

78%



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FALLOUT 3

Point Lookout

»PRICE: £7.99

»TIME TO COMPLETE: 8-10 hours

»PUBLISHER: Bethesda Softworks

»DEVELOPER: Bethesda Game Studios

There's plenty of choice for *Fallout 3* DLC – some better than others – but if you're after something more like the main campaign of *Fallout 3*, then look no further than *Point Lookout*. It's like a condensed version of the game, with new areas to explore and NPCs to meet. Though it doesn't increase the level cap like *Broken Steel* does (you may want to pick that pack up as well, actually), it's still a must-have download for anyone who has seen everything the original game has to offer.



RED DEAD REDEMPTION

Undead Nightmare Pack

»PRICE: £7.99

»TIME TO COMPLETE: 8-10 hours

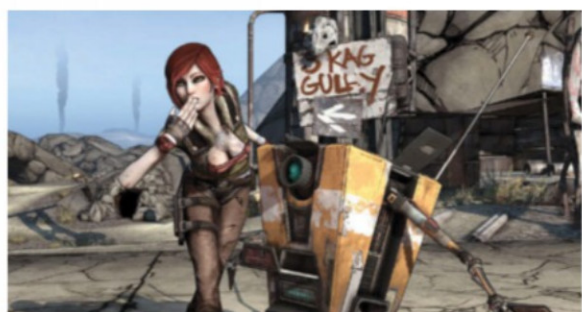
»PUBLISHER: Rockstar Games

»DEVELOPER: In-house

We could compliment the wealth of content available in the *Undead Nightmare Pack*. We could celebrate the distinct variety that zombies in *Red Dead Redemption's* world provide, or even the fantastic job Rockstar has done at making such an incongruent piece of content work in the Wild West. But none of this is quite as appealing as the fact that you can find, tame and ride a unicorn, thereby automatically making it the best piece of download content ever. Fact.



TOP 10 BEST



BORDERLANDS

Extravasplosion

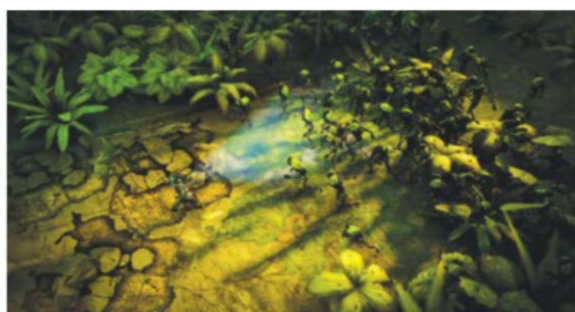
»PRICE: £15.99

»TIME TO COMPLETE: 12 hours

»PUBLISHER: 2K Games

»DEVELOPER: Gearbox Software

Bit of a cheat this one since it's more of a collection of DLC than any single pack, but at four quid per pack it's impossible to deny the value of content here. There are parts that aren't quite that special – Moxxi's Underdome is a bit repetitive – but *Borderlands* fans nonetheless owe it to themselves to play each of these. More levels, more weapons, more quests, more midgets with shotguns: what else could you ask for from additional – and a good few hours worth of – *Borderlands* content.



DEAD NATION

Road To Devastation

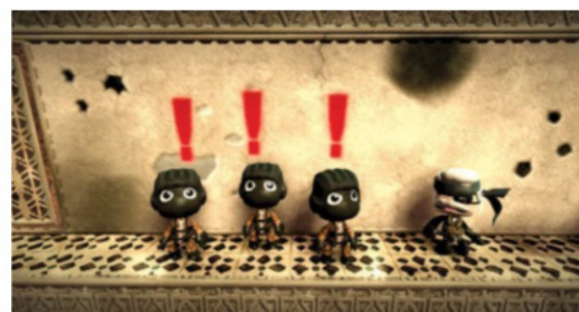
»PRICE: £3.49

»TIME TO COMPLETE: 5-10 hours

»PUBLISHER: Sony

»DEVELOPER: Housemarque

If you haven't yet played Housemarque's superlative *Dead Nation* then go do it. As for this DLC addition, the nominal fee will gain you access to a new challenge mode. While it might sound kind of throwaway, fans of the game should trust us when we say it's absolutely not. Though the objective is to see how far you can survive, there is a finite end and you won't reach it until you've finally settled on the optimal route and best strategy. Try it on Grim for added longevity.



LITTLEBIGPLANET

Metal Gear Solid Level Kit

»PRICE: £4.79

»TIME TO COMPLETE: 5 hours

»PUBLISHER: Sony

»DEVELOPER: Media Molecule

Though this might seem a little outdated since the series has gone on to earn an improved sequel and the improved DLC to go with it, none of the content packs since then have been as revolutionary as the *MGS Level Kit*. The addition of the Paintinator and customisable enemy health bars was a revelation, bringing untold amounts of potential to the create-'em-up. It's a gamer's right to shoot things to bits, and with this DLC it became considerably easier to do just that.

Top 10 Best Value DLC



BATTLEFIELD 3

Premium Pack

»PRICE: £39.99

»TIME TO COMPLETE: 20+ hours

»PUBLISHER: EA

»DEVELOPER: DICE

Whether you get value for money from the hefty £39.99 price tag will depend on just how much time you spend on *Battlefield 3*. If it's your go-to multiplayer game and you're still playing it now, then without a doubt it'd be worth getting. Each one is themed with a set of new maps, weapons and vehicles. Though they won't all appeal to you – you're either an infantry player or a vehicle player – they are all fantastic maps and great additions to an already jam-packed game.



FALLOUT: NEW VEGAS

Old World Blues

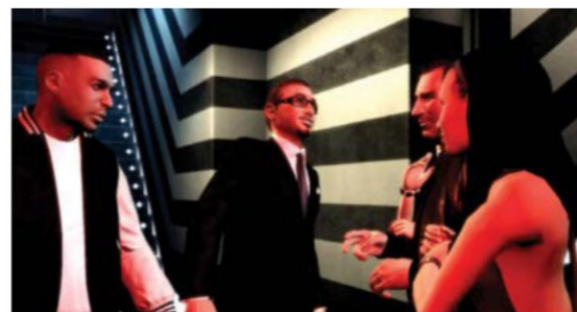
»PRICE: £7.99

»TIME TO COMPLETE: 7-8 hours

»PUBLISHER: Bethesda Softworks

»DEVELOPER: Obsidian Entertainment

Old World Blues is to *New Vegas* as *Point Lookout* is to *Fallout 3*, but while this is a compact mini-campaign to work through it provides so much more. Humour being the primary feature: *Old World Blues* is genuinely funny and when that is added to a freeform and open area to explore – with 35 unique locations to visit – you could quite easily lose yourself in this content. Perhaps not as long-lasting as some of the others in this list, *Old World Blues* more than makes up for it with its originality.



GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

Episodes From Liberty City

»PRICE: £15.99

»TIME TO COMPLETE: 20 hours

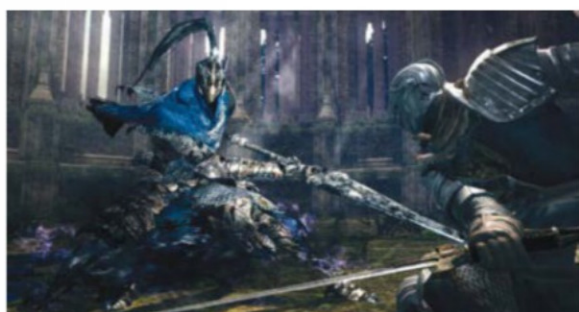
»PUBLISHER: Rockstar Games

»DEVELOPER: In-house

Considered the holy grail of DLC, the *Episodes From Liberty City* are almost entirely contained games by themselves. You don't need *GTA IV* to play them, and not only does it give you a pair of new characters to play as and new missions to complete, but the entire sandbox of Liberty City – and its related multiplayer – is available for you to explore. Naturally the best part of this DLC is seeing how these two distinct storylines tie into the main game, but even alone these are better than most games.

VALUE DLC

With more and more publishers looking to nickel and dime you every time a game is released, you'd probably appreciate knowing which DLC is worth picking up for your favourite games? Thankfully, then, it's just as well Play is here to save the day. Again...



DARK SOULS

Artorias Of The Abyss

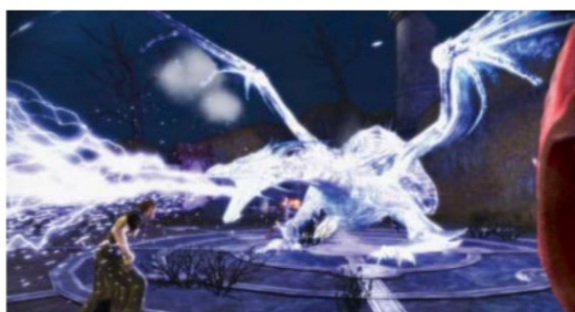
»PRICE: £9.99

»TIME TO COMPLETE: 10 hours

»PUBLISHER: Namco Bandai

»DEVELOPER: From Software

In true *Dark Souls* fashion, accessing this DLC is as hard as the content itself. But you forgive it because, for some reason, *Dark Souls* makes it okay to be a masochist. The fact that it ties so neatly into the main game should be complimented – even if it does mean that you'll miss it entirely if you've played past a certain point – but the hours of trial and error you'll get from hunting down Artorias is something that slots so neatly into the game it's worth starting again just to experience it.



DRAGON AGE: ORIGINS

Awakening

»PRICE: £15.99

»TIME TO COMPLETE: 15-20 hours

»PUBLISHER: EA

»DEVELOPER: BioWare

Not only is *Awakening* a good chunk of content to add to your *Dragon Age: Origins* playthrough, but with it tying into the story and lore of the world it's practically a must-have for fans of the series. It continues on from the end of the game, but teases the introduction of *Dragon Age 2* – but if that wasn't enough, new abilities, five new characters and six possible specialisations make this one impossible to ignore. The rest of the *Dragon Age: Origins* DLC, however, is probably best to avoid entirely.



TOP TEN PSN RETRO



1 Metal Gear Solid



2 Resident Evil 4



3 Okami HD



4 God Hand



5 Grand Theft Auto III



6 Final Fantasy IX



7 Streets Of Rage 2



8 The Secret Of Monkey Island



9 Driver



10 Sonic The Hedgehog 2

Old-school champions: Some of the best old games... IN THE WORLD

❖ *Silent Hill* used to be a great franchise. What happened, man?



Silent Hill 2



• Release date November 2001 • Publisher Konami • Developer In-house
• Games it influenced *Silent Hill 3*, *Amnesia: The Dark Descent*, *Siren*, *Dead Space*, *Project Zero*

THIS IS THE one. When it comes to survival horror, *Silent Hill 2* is the terrifying pinnacle of the genre that all pretenders wish they could be. Except for the also-excellent sequel, nothing has really come close since. At a time when *Resident Evil* was startling people with dogs jumping through windows, *Silent Hill* came along and took things to a more psychological level. The threat in *Resi* was physical, shambling zombies created by some mad experiment. Scary, sure, but tangible and manageable. The threat in *Silent Hill* is a malevolent, cursed town, twisting your desires and fears into a torturous nightmare from which there is no escape. It's a good time.

As far as actually playing it goes, *Silent Hill* suffers from the same problems as every other survival horror of the time. Movement is slow and awkward, combat doesn't really work and having to go into a pause menu

to do anything gets a bit tiring. Many of these design decisions actually enhance the atmosphere of the game though, and luckily, everything else is sublime.

It's impossible to talk about what makes *Silent Hill 2* scary without mentioning sound. This is a game built for headphones. Discordant noise surrounds you, horrific screams and snarls emanating from the thick fog that ensures you can't see far in any direction. And the static, oh the static. The radio you carry emits a blaring buzz whenever a monster is near, and few things in gaming have been scarier, before or since. Hearing that static slowly increase as you look around, trying to see the encroaching horror and failing miserably, is pants-wetting material.

What makes *Silent Hill 2* so great is that it isn't just scary, it's smart. The game revolves around James Sunderland, travelling to Silent Hill after receiving a letter from his dead wife.

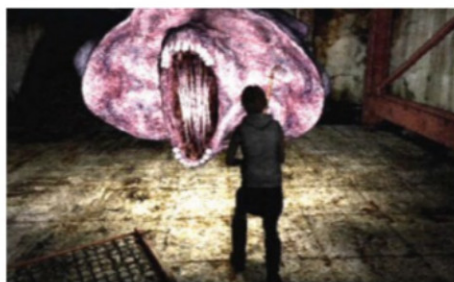
Wracked with guilt and grief, the cursed town becomes a reflection of his subconscious. Everything is there for a reason. Grotesque monsters are not designed at random, but to represent specific parts of James' feelings.

Pyramid Head, the malformed executioner made "famous" by the spin-off movie, manifests James' guilt and desire to be punished for his actions. The bloodied, faceless nurses in skimpy outfits are a distorted reflection of a young man's sexual urges, repressed as his wife lies dying. This is a game that truly is open to multiple interpretations, and a forerunner in the constant "games are art" debate. Somebody sit down Roger Ebert with a copy of *Silent Hill 2* and watch him change his mind.

WHAT WE SAID: Issue 83 • 73%

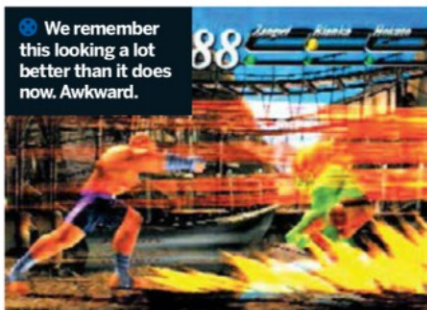
"In terms of atmosphere, *Silent Hill 2* is an absolute masterpiece."

❖ Don't buy the broken HD Collection, find the original.



❖ Alternate names for *Silent Hill: Quiet Mound*, *Sedate Elevation*.





❄️ We remember this looking a lot better than it does now. Awkward.



❄️ You know, not much of this fighting is actually on the streets.

NEVER COMING TO PSN #14

Street Fighter EX Plus

• Release September 1997 • Developer Arika



THE LATE NINETIES were arguably the glory years for *Street Fighter*. *Street Fighter Alpha 3* and *Street Fighter 3: 3rd Strike* are still remembered as two of the best games in the franchise for good reason. Less often remembered is the obscure, non-Capcom *Street Fighter EX* series. The first *Street Fighter* games to experiment with 3D graphics, *Street Fighter EX* was created by developers Arika, a small studio made of ex-Capcom employees.

For the most part the games played like standard *Street Fighter*, but in super-blocky polygonal 3D goodness. The most unique part of the *EX* series was the roster. *SF* mainstays like Ryu, Ken, Chun-Li and Guile made up about half of the roster, but a variety of original fighters featured as well. Who can forget characters like secret agent Doctrine Dark, Arabian strongman Darun and superhero thing Skullomania? Arika still owns the rights to the characters it created, making a PSN release for any of the *SFEX* series unlikely. An interesting curio in the history of fighting games, then, but not a crucial one.

WE COULD HAVE DONE WITHOUT

Enter The Matrix



• Release May 2003 • Developer Shiny Entertainment

REMEMBER THE MATRIX? How revolutionary it was at the time? How cool it was when things went all slow motion and Neo bent at unnatural angles to avoid bullets and it went SWOOOSH? It may be overdone and passé now, but back then it was the business. *Enter The Matrix* came out the same time as *The Matrix Reloaded*, and promised

a story that complemented the film, with new footage filmed exclusively for the game! Fans were understandably excited. Imagine, playing *The Matrix*! Unfortunately gameplay was a mess, trying to emulate the slick style of the film but feeling more like a bad imitation, and the martial arts were *rubbish*. The game was clearly rushed to release to coincide with the film, and suffered for it. And if you were looking forward to busting heads as Neo, you were out of luck. Players instead controlled ancillary characters Ghost and Niobe. Who? Exactly! Unfortunately for Shiny Entertainment, a better *Matrix* game already existed, and its name was *Max Payne*. At least *Enter The Matrix* captured the spirit of the film sequels in one aspect – they were all crap.



PS2 CLASSICS REVIEW

❄️ *SSX* should not be used as a real-life snowboarding guide. You will die.



SSX 3



• Release October 2003

• Developer EA Canada

EVERYBODY POINTS TO *SSX Tricky* as the series' highpoint, but everybody is wrong. *SSX 3* is a glorious realisation of the potential of the first two games, and the first to capture the lonely, stark beauty of sliding down a mountain on a bit of wood at life-threatening speeds.

Other *SSX* games featured separate tracks on a variety of mountains, but *SSX 3* took place on a single peak, with a number of different routes split into separate levels. The masterstroke was that, eventually, players would unlock the entire mountain to board down in one go. The full course took about half an hour, and completing it felt epic.

Free ride is where *SSX 3* was most enjoyable. Boarding down the mountain on your own, enjoying the view and the solitude as the sun crests far away peaks and DJ Atomicka is really annoying on the radio (you can turn him off). *SSX 3* did something different, and was all the better for it.

RETRO GAMES WE SAID WE WANT TO PLAY AGAIN BUT PROBABLY WON'T



Star Wars: Dark Forces

Star Wars! Everyone loves *Star Wars*! Or did, at one point in time, before it was rubbish. *Dark Forces* introduced Kyle Katarn, star of the *Jedi Knight* games. It hasn't aged well.



Star Wars: Masters Of Teras Kasi

A *Star Wars* fighting game sounds like the best thing ever, and, if made well, totally would be. *Masters Of Teras Kasi* was not made well. Face off with friends using well-known characters like Luke, Han and... Arden Lyn?



Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace

The film was rubbish but the game was actually pretty fun. Played from a weird, top-down view, you went through all the exciting moments from the film, like that bit where Obi-Wan misses a jump to a pillar, climbs back up, and misses again, swearing.



Star Wars Racer Revenge

The first one wasn't on PlayStation but the sequel was PS2 exclusive. Hah! Podracing was the one cool thing to come out of *The Phantom Menace*, and works really well as a videogame. George Lucas, visionary genius.

14

PS3 GAMES WITH EASY PLATINUM TROPHIES

Fond of those shiny platinum Trophies, but fed up with spending the hours in a game to unlock them? Well then you're in luck, because if you are willing to stoop to the lowest of the low, these awful games will often give up their platinum Trophy without much effort at all. And don't worry, we won't judge you



FAMILY GUY: BACK TO THE MULTIVERSE

■ Find It For: £23.00

The majority of the Trophies for this *Family Guy* game will come as part of your playthrough of the main game, just be sure to check what is required for each Trophy before you start to work towards them. The Brian and Stewie 500 kills each might sound like a lot, but you'll get them easily providing you kill every enemy. Additionally, all the multiplayer Trophies can be earned solo providing you have a second controller. The only difficult Trophy is Cartoon Apocalypse, which requires you to survive 30 waves in Multiverse Madness. Having a co-op partner will be the biggest help, otherwise the easiest place to grind this out is on the Airport map, where a counter will inexplicably make it tougher for enemies to hit you. Look for a purple teddy bear, and hunker down here.

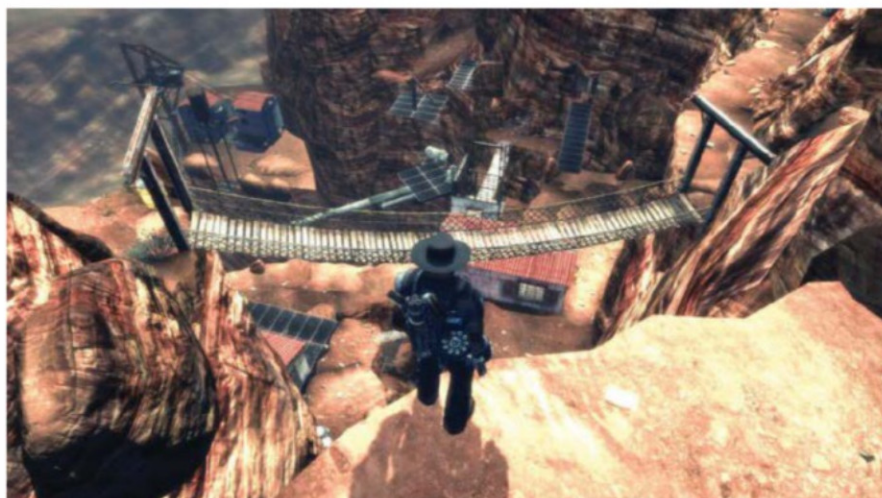


ALONE IN THE DARK: INFERNO

■ Find It For: £6.25

First of all, you'll need to play through the game without skipping any of the puzzles, while looking for combat opportunities to unlock any necessary Trophies. If you skip a puzzle you'll automatically miss out on a Trophy and will have to do that episode again. Once completed, restart from Sequence 8, Episode 1 and you can work on crafting each of the possible weapon combinations and hunting down and burning all of the Roots in Central Park. When creating each of the combinations, however, remember that you'll need to create one of everything, which includes combining explosive bottles with other items. You should also note that explosive glass bottles and explosive plastic bottles count as separate items, and should recreate each item with both types. Also, during Episode 3, Sequence 2 keep an eye out for a pond after burning the cocoon – shoot the goldfish in here for 'Fisherman's Foe'.

14 Easy Platinum Trophies



DAMNATION

■ Find It For: £3.40

There isn't much about *Damnation's* Trophy collection that should prove too difficult since it's yet another third-person shooter set of unlockables, mostly requiring you to kill 20 enemies with particular weapons. You will need to complete the game on Insane mode, which is unlocked after finishing it. However, cheat codes can be used to unlock the difficulty from the start and won't disable Trophies.

- Enter 'Revenant' to unlock Insane difficulty.
- Enter 'BlowOffSomeSteam' to unlock and use the Super Pistol, which will likely be your weapon of choice.
- Enter 'LockNLoad' to create a custom loadout to pick the weapons you want to use.
- Enter 'LockNLoadAll' to unlock every weapon, though you likely won't need this with the Super Pistol available.



TRINE 2

■ Find It For: £12.00

Trine 2 isn't actually a bad game – it's very pretty, and worth a look if you're interested in platformers that test your brain as well as your reflexes – but you don't even need to finish the game to get the Platinum and that surely makes it worth an appearance on this list. There are a couple of tricky Trophies, but the majority are just a case of looking for the right location to attempt it. 'Flying Solo' can easily be earned on Chapter 2 when playing as the Wizard, just restart the level as the wizard and don't switch characters once. Then there's 'A Hail Of Arrows', which requires catching three arrows with the Knight's shield. It's hard to get three very straight arrows fired into the air, so remember which direction the arrows are flying and counter it by moving into position.



HARRY POTTER AND THE DEATHLY HALLOWS - PART 2

■ Find It For: £8.00

We wouldn't usually condone anyone playing this game, but most of the Trophies can be collected throughout the course of the game with minimal effort. The only problem is that you will have to play the game twice to get the platinum as the hardest difficulty is only unlocked after completing the game once. The step up in difficulty isn't particularly noticeable, but it's worth noting before you start. The only tricky Trophy is 'Care of the Castle', which requires you to "cause minimal damage" during the chase scene with Voldemort. You can destroy only a maximum of ten items during this chase, though not all of them need to be – only destroy candle-lit items since the explosions will slow Voldemort's cloud down dramatically, and if he's still quite far away then don't destroy anything. Keep count; if you destroy more than ten you'll need to restart from the last checkpoint.



SAW II

■ Find It For: £7.00

Most of *Saw II's* Trophies are tailored around each of the different mini-game puzzles you come across. You'll need to beat them in the fastest time possible, with a normal and an insane difficulty rating (and a Trophy for each). Save before each of these and you can quickly and easily reload should you fail to beat the recommended time. Additionally you will need to play the game twice to get two different Trophies: at the start of the game you'll need to make a decision on whether or not Campbell lives. Let him live and you'll unlock 'Path Of Blood' once the game is complete, but choose to have him die and you'll unlock 'Path Of Flesh' instead. Simply play the second time and make the opposite decision, choosing to ignore as much of the game (the puzzles and the like) as you can to rush through the campaign. There are collectables, too, so make sure you keep an eye out for them on the first playthrough.



X-MEN DESTINY

■ Find It For: £7.00

Though there's plenty to do and see in *X-Men Destiny*, none of it will really prove to be too challenging. You will need to complete the game on the hardest difficulty, but this won't provide much of an obstacle; it's barely noticeable. You'll also need to collect dossiers, X-Genes and complete side missions, but as long as you're careful in your exploration you should have no issues here. It is worth noting that there is a decision you'll need to make in Mission 6 that will unlock one of two Trophies: make sure you save before this and reload the game to make the alternate decision.



MONOPOLY: STREETS

■ Find It For: £13.00

There's a wide variety of Trophies available for *Monopoly: Streets*, but if you play with a second controller you can use the custom game setups to make unlocking the majority of them ridiculously easy. Just go down the list, ticking them off one by one. Make use of player trades and declare bankruptcy when in control of two players. Most important are the custom rules that deal out all the properties at the start of the game, enabling you to trade properties for most of the Trophies available. Outside of that, it's pretty simple with only a handful of multiplayer Trophies and a couple of luck-based ones dependent on particular dice rolls.



TRANSFORMERS: DARK OF THE MOON

■ Find It For: £7.78

The Trophy collection for this game is your typical third-person shooter bunch: complete levels, kill X number of numbers in a certain way and the odd level-specific objective. Providing you know what to work towards, you'll unlock the majority of these as you play through anyway, and the mission select option means you won't miss out on anything. There are collectables, but they're not particularly challenging, while Hard difficulty won't prove much of a challenge. The Trophies based on earning a high score aren't particularly tough either, though you will need to make sure you keep your multiplayer above 15 as much as possible and use melee attacks (since they earn additional points). There's multiplayer too, but you won't need to play for much more than half an hour and the online community isn't quite dead yet – just remember to switch to Worldwide matchmaking.



THE TESTAMENT OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

■ Find It For: £18.00

There are only a handful of Trophies that won't unlock as part of your natural progression through the game providing you complete every puzzle, so here's the Trophies you need to look out for.

- 'The Brain': don't skip any puzzles.
- 'The Holmesian': as Watson in Baker Street, search the flat for different mementoes and have Watson investigate them all.
- 'Pea-Souper': Use Holmes' Sixth Sense 15 times.
- 'A Very Fine Loafer': Keep speaking to every NPC you encounter and this will eventually appear. Whitechapel is a good opportunity for this.
- 'Blackmailer': there are three places where you will need to blackmail; when you've discovered the Reverend's secret, saying "afraid" to the boys hiding in the cemetery and telling Danny The Anvil you'll call the police.

14 Easy Platinum Trophies



WANTED: WEAPONS OF FATE

■ Find It For: £5.85

To get the Platinum here you will need to complete the game more than once, but luckily it doesn't take too long to finish. Start by completing it on the hardest difficulty, after that you can complete Close Combat Mode and Headshot Mode on the easier setting. However, there's a glitch that means you can skip a lot of the game: start the game and play to the first checkpoint after the guys break into your room. Once the checkpoint saves quit the game and go to Act Selection and pick the final level; complete the game from here and the Trophy should unlock with no problems. Beyond that, the rest of the Trophies should unlock without any effort.



CABELA'S ADVENTURE CAMP

■ Find It For: £11.44

You'll need PlayStation Move to play this one, but for a couple of hours work you'll have one of the easiest platinum Trophies ever. The majority will unlock as you play each of the different events, but if you're trying for specific ones then do so on the first level in each event since they're always the easiest ones. 'Speleologist' requires you to look for a hidden cave in Biking stage 1, which is to the left of a waterfall about halfway through the level. The only other tricky Trophy is 'Marksman', which tasks you with keeping a 200-point accuracy bonus on Skeet – it might take a few attempts, but you can let a couple of discs drop without lowering your accuracy too much.



DEAD TO RIGHTS: RETRIBUTION

■ Find It For: £5.00

A very typical set of Trophies for a very typical third-person shooter. If you're familiar at all with the genre, which you obviously are, then this is easy. As should always be the case, check out the list of Trophies first to know what you should be working towards when playing through the game. There are collectables to look out for as well, but there is a mission replay function so don't worry too much about missing any. 'Perfect Balance' requires a maximum variation bonus between gun kills, melee combat and tag-team Shadow kills; but this can actually be earned on the first mission without Shadow, so concentrate on changing up your style while you fight and you should knock this out early on. Additionally, 'Shhhhh' is easiest to earn on Chapter 6 when playing as Shadow; just stick to stealth kills and the Trophy will unlock at the end of the level providing you've earned ten kills.



G.I. JOE: THE RISE OF COBRA

■ Find It For: £1.50

As a truly awful game, it should come as no surprise that the Trophy collection for *G.I. Joe: Rise Of Cobra* is a little lacklustre. Unfortunately there's a lot of effort involved with most Trophies since it'll require playing as certain characters on certain missions: keep an eye out and unlock your characters accordingly. You'll also need to finish the game on Hardcore difficulty – which isn't particularly challenging – so you might as well start with that. Remember that cover will ultimately fail, so use terrain features to act as permanent cover and prevent yourself from getting hit. The more damage you deal without taking it, the quicker you'll earn the Accelerator Suit, which will act as rather useful invincibility for a short time. Outside of that, there isn't really much else to worry about. Except for the fact that you're playing *G.I. Joe: The Rise Of Cobra*.

PLAYLIST

If you want to know what a game scored then these pages are for you

TEAM PICKS LEISURE TIME GAMES



top five SAM ROBERTS

- 1 Lego Batman 2: DC Super Heroes
- 2 Assassin's Creed III
- 3 Persona 4: Golden
- 4 The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim
- 5 Batman: Arkham City



top five ANDY SALTER

- 1 The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim
- 2 XCOM: Enemy Unknown
- 3 Far Cry 3
- 4 Rage
- 5 The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion



top five REBECCA RICHARDS

- 1 Metal Gear Solid
- 2 Rock Band Blitz
- 3 LittleBigPlanet
- 4 Borderlands 2
- 5 God Of War



top five SAM SMITH

- 1 Far Cry 3
- 2 Okami HD
- 3 Virtue's Last Reward
- 4 Assassin's Creed III
- 5 God Hand

PS3 LISTING



game	issue	score
007 Legends	225	44%
3D Collection	195	75%
3D Dot Game Heroes	192	87%
50 Cent: Blood On The Sand	177	70%
Ace Combat: Assault Horizon	211	78%
The Adventures Of Tintin	212	58%
Afro Samurai	177	61%
Agarest: Generations Of War	187	78%
Agarest: Generations Of War 2	223	43%
Agarest: Generations Of War Zero	209	52%
Air Conflicts: Secret Wars	208	58%
Alice: Madness Returns	207	57%
Aliens vs Predator	189	79%
Alone In The Dark	173	70%
Alpha Protocol	193	83%
Ape Escape	208	55%
Arcana Heart 3	207	79%
Armored Core For Answer	173	65%
Armored Core 4	153	67%
Armored Core V	217	60%
Army Of Two	164	80%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	188	65%
Ar Tonelico Qoga: Knell Of Ar Ciel	203	27%
Ashes Cricket 2009	183	30%
Assassin's Creed	161	58%
Assassin's Creed II	186	89%
Assassin's Creed III	225	78%
Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood	199	91%
Assassin's Creed Revelations	212	75%
Asura's Wrath	216	67%
Atelier Rorona: The Alchemist Of Arland	198	77%
Backbreaker	193	70%
Band Hero	187	68%
Batman: Arkham Asylum	183	85%
Batman: Arkham City	211	94%
Battle Fantasia	176	67%
Battlefield: Bad Company	168	78%
Battlefield: Bad Company 2	190	93%
Battlefield 3	212	88%
Battleship	219	44%
Bayonetta*	187	93%
The Beatles: Rock Band	184	96%
Beijing 2008	168	54%
Beowulf	161	61%
Binary Domain	216	70%
Bionic Commando	179	82%
BioShock	172	93%
BioShock 2	189	88%
Birds Of Steel	217	55%
BlackSite	163	43%
Bladestorm: The Hundred Years' War	160	58%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger	190	85%
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift	198	94%
Blazing Angels	151	54%
Bleach: Soul Resurrección	209	63%
Blitz: The League II	172	67%
Blur	193	86%
Bodycount	210	54%
Borderlands	185	80%
Borderlands 2	223	90%
The Bourne Conspiracy	168	72%
Brink	206	67%
Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway	171	75%
Brütal Legend	185	79%
Bulletstorm	203	86%
Burnout Paradise	162	74%
Buzz!: Quiz TV	168	82%
Buzz! Quiz World	185	70%
Call Of Duty 3	151	77%
Call Of Duty: World At War	173	68%

game	issue	score
Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	160	88%
Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 2	186	94%
Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 3	212	88%
Call Of Duty: Black Ops	199	94%
Call Of Duty: Black Ops II	226	80%
Call Of Juarez: Bound In Blood	181	85%
Call Of Juarez: The Cartel	208	30%
Captain America: Super Soldier	208	70%
Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow	197	85%
Carnival Island	213	53%
Cars 2	208	68%
Catherine	215	61%
Champion Jockey	210	50%
Chronicles Of Riddick: Assault On Dark Athena	178	87%
Child Of Eden	211	80%
Civilization Revolution	168	90%
Clash Of The Titans	193	65%
Clive Barker's Jericho	159	84%
The Club	163	80%
Colin McRae: DIRT	158	91%
Colin McRae: DIRT 2	184	87%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	178	65%
Conan	160	71%
Condemned 2	165	78%
Conflict: Denied Ops	164	50%
Crash Time 4: The Syndicate	218	37%
Create	199	71%
Cross Edge	182	59%
Crysis 2	204	72%
The Cursed Crusade	211	40%
Damnation	181	38%
Damage Inc.: Pacific Squadron WWII	223	37%
Dance Dance Revolution	201	52%
Dante's Inferno	189	80%
The Darkness	154	91%
The Darkness II	215	76%
Dark Sector	165	62%
Dark Souls	211	90%
Dark Void	188	81%
Darksiders	188	83%
Darksiders II	221	86%
DC Universe Online	202	80%
de Blob 2	203	65%
Dead Or Alive 5	223	78%
Dead Island	210	79%
Dead Rising 2	197	78%
Dead Rising 2: Off The Record	211	61%
Dead Space	172	87%
Dead Space 2	201	92%
Dead To Rights: Retribution	192	68%
Def Jam: Icon	151	79%
Def Jam Rapstar	199	72%
Demon's Souls	193	92%
Destroy All Humans!: Path Of The Furon	178	29%
Deus Ex: Human Revolution	209	91%
Devil May Cry 4	163	89%
Devil May Cry HD Collection	217	80%
DiRT 3	206	85%
DiRT Showdown	219	84%
Disgaea 3: Absence Of Justice	175	81%
Dishonored	224	92%
 Stealth has never been so satisfying as it is in <i>Dishonored</i>. One of 2012's finest. Do the game a favour and play it sneaky.		
DJ Hero	186	91%
DJ Hero 2	198	88%
Doctor Who: The Eternity Clock	220	32%
Doom 3: BFG Edition	225	69%
DmC: Devil May Cry	227	93%
 <i>DmC</i> injects new life into one of the best genres in all of gaming, and does so with a style and confidence that elevates it beyond its roots.		
Dragon Age: Origins	186	82%
Dragon Age II	203	86%
Dragon Ball: Raging Blast	186	40%
Dragon Ball Z: Burst Limit	168	61%
Dragon's Dogma	218	48%
Driver: San Francisco	209	68%

game	issue	score
Duke Nukem Forever	207	33%
Dungeon Siege III	206	80%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam	160	40%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 2	176	43%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 3	208	56%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	189	37%
Dynasty Warriors 6	164	30%
Dynasty Warriors 6: Empires	181	44%
Dynasty Warriors 7	204	32%
EA Sports Active 2	200	81%
EA Sports Grand Slam Tennis	215	75%
EA Sports MMA	198	89%
Eat Lead	178	38%
EDF: Insect Armageddon	208	64%
The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion	152	91%
The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim	212	93%
El Shaddai: Ascension Of The Metatron	208	77%
Enchanted Arms	152	69%
Enemy Territory: Quake Wars	168	60%
Enslaved: Odyssey To The West	197	83%
Epic Mickey 2: The Power Of Two	226	55%
Eternal Sonata	176	87%
Everybody's Golf 5*	158	88%
Everybody's Golf: World Tour	165	91%
Eye Of Judgment	159	65%
EyePet	185	83%
EyePet: Move	197	84%
F1 2010	197	86%
F1 2011	211	71%
F1 2012	223	79%
F1 Race Stars	226	61%
FaceBreaker	170	55%
Fairytale Fights	186	51%
Fallout 3	173	97%
Fallout: New Vegas	198	88%
Family Guy: Back To The Multiverse	227	40%
Fantastic Four: Rise Of The Silver Surfer	155	39%
Far Cry 2	172	74%
Far Cry 3	226	88%
F.E.A.R.	151	81%
F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin	176	87%
F.E.A.R. 3	208	60%
FIFA 08	159	84%
FIFA 09	171	87%
FIFA 10	184	90%
FIFA 11	197	91%
FIFA 12	210	86%
FIFA 13	223	82%
FIFA Street (2012)	217	74%
FIFA Street 3	163	66%
FIFA World Cup 2010	192	70%
The Fight	199	42%
Fight Night Champion	203	88%
Fight Night Round 3	151	87%
Fight Night Round 4	181	84%
Final Fantasy XIII	190	85%
Final Fantasy XIII-2	214	80%
Fist Of The North Star: Ken's Rage	198	51%
Folklore	158	66%
Formula One Championship Edition	151	72%
Fracture	171	72%
Front Mission Evolved	198	52%
Fuel	180	49%
Full Auto 2: Battlelines	151	69%
G-Force	183	59%
Game Of Thrones	220	39%
Genji: Days Of The Blade	151	38%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	83%
Ghost Recon Future Soldier	219	60%
Ghostbusters: The Videogame	180	80%
GI Joe	183	22%
The Godfather	151	37%
The Godfather II	178	38%
God Of War III	190	88%
God Of War Collection*	188	93%
God Of War Collection: Volume II	210	70%
The Golden Compass	162	32%
GoldenEye 007: Reloaded	213	63%

This month's new entries

The newest games, freshly squeezed among all your old favourites

DmC: Devil May Cry PS3	93%	Call Of Duty: Black Ops Declassified VITA	18%
Family Guy: Back To The Multiverse PS3	40%	Virtue's Last Reward VITA	84%
Lego: The Lord Of The Rings PS3	85%	Derrick The Deathfin PSN	79%
Ni No Kuni: Wrath Of The White Witch PS3	85%	Guardians Of Middle-Earth PSN	71%
Ratchet & Clank: Q-Force PS3	52%	Uncharted: Fight For Fortune PSN	83%
Sonic & All-Stars Racing: Transformed PS3	88%		

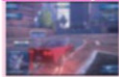
game	issue	score
Gran Turismo 5	200	85%
Gran Turismo 5 Prologue	165	75%
Grand Theft Auto IV	166	98%
Green Day: Rock Band	194	77%
GTA: Episodes From Liberty City	191	94%
Guitar Hero III	160	90%
Guitar Hero 5	184	81%
Guitar Hero: Aerosmith	168	63%
Guitar Hero Greatest Hits	182	76%
Guitar Hero Metallica	179	88%
Guitar Hero: Van Halen	189	65%
Guitar Hero: Warriors Of Rock	197	71%
Guitar Hero World Tour	173	95%
Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 1	200	21%
Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 2	208	37%
Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince	182	60%
Harry Potter And The Order Of The Phoenix	155	32%
Haze	167	64%
Heavenly Sword	157	71%
Heavy Rain	189	94%
Heavy Rain: Move Edition	198	70%
Heroes Over Europe	184	48%
Hitman: Absolution	225	93%



It's still a bit rough around some edges, but there's no denying the scope, intelligence and passion poured into *Hitman: Absolution*.

Homefront	203	69%
The House Of The Dead: Overkill	212	75%
Hunted: The Demon's Forge	207	59%
Hyperdimension Neptunia	202	21%
Ice Age 3: Dawn Of The Dinosaurs	182	47%
Ice Age 4: Continental Drift: Arctic Games	222	40%
Ico & Shadow Of The Colossus Classics HD	210	94%
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds Of Prey	183	72%
The Incredible Hulk	168	52%
inFamous	180	81%
inFamous 2	207	83%
International Cricket 2010	194	61%
Inversion	220	49%
Iron Man	166	58%
Iron Man 2	193	50%
The Jak And Daxter Trilogy	216	82%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
James Bond 007: Blood Stone	199	63%
James Cameron's Avatar: The Game	187	64%
JASF: Jane's Advanced Strike Fighters	217	30%
John Daly's ProStroke Golf	197	70%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	159	78%
Just Cause 2	190	87%
Kane & Lynch: Dead Men	160	73%
Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days	196	71%
Katamari Forever	184	88%
Killzone 2	176	93%
Killzone 3	202	80%
Kingdoms Of Amalur: Reckoning	215	70%
The King Of Fighters XII	182	82%
The King Of Fighters XIII	213	76%
Knights Contract	202	53%
Kung Fu Panda 2	207	20%
Kung Fu Rider	196	65%
Lair	158	52%
LA Noire	206	91%
Last Rebellion	191	42%
Legend Of Spyro: Dawn Of The Dragon	174	54%
Legendary	173	62%
Lego Batman	173	65%
Lego Batman 2	221	80%
Lego Harry Potter: Years 1-4	194	79%
Lego Harry Potter: Years 5-7	213	67%
Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	167	73%
Lego Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	187	71%
Lego Pirates Of The Caribbean	206	76%
Lego Rock Band	187	75%
Lego Star Wars: The Complete Saga	160	76%
Lego Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	204	79%
Lego: The Lord Of The Rings	227	85%
Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust	180	24%
LittleBigPlanet	172	94%

LittleBigPlanet 2	201	96%
LittleBigPlanet: Karting	225	85%
Lollipop Chainsaw	221	72%
London 2012	221	45%
The Lord Of The Rings: Aragorn's Quest	199	60%
The Lord Of The Rings: Conquest	175	52%
The Lord Of The Rings: War In The North	213	42%
Lost Planet 2	192	75%
Lost Planet: Extreme Condition	163	69%
Lost: The Video Game	164	38%
Madagascar 3	224	39%
Madden NFL 07	151	82%
Madden NFL 08	157	82%
Madden NFL 09	170	83%
Madden NFL 10	184	82%
Madden NFL 11	196	84%
Madden NFL 12	209	85%
Madden NFL 13	223	86%
Mafia II	196	81%
MAG	189	68%
Majin And The Forsaken Kingdom	199	72%
Marvel vs Capcom 3	202	88%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance	151	64%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	185	57%
Max Anarchy (Import)	223	70%
Max Payne 3	219	77%
Mass Effect 2	201	97%
Mass Effect 3	216	93%
Medal Of Honor	198	86%
Medal Of Honor Airborne	161	85%
Medal Of Honor: Warfighter	225	72%
Medieval Moves	213	47%
Mercenaries 2: World In Flames	171	78%
Metal Gear Solid 4	167	92%
Metal Gear Solid HD Collection	214	91%
Mobile Suit Gundam: Crossfire	151	37%
Michael Jackson: The Experience	205	58%
Midnight Club: Los Angeles	173	84%
Mindjack	202	38%
Mini Ninjas	184	80%
Mirror's Edge	173	71%
ModNation Racers	192	90%
Monster Madness	170	78%
Mortal Kombat	205	81%
Mortal Kombat vs DC Universe	173	68%
MotoGP 08	172	65%
MotoGP 09/10	190	77%
MotoGP 10/11	204	64%
MotorStorm	151	92%
MotorStorm: Apocalypse	203	76%
MotorStorm: Pacific Rift	172	93%
Mud: FIM Motocross Championship	217	50%
MX vs ATV: Alive	206	42%
MX vs ATV Reflex	189	68%
MX vs ATV Untamed	164	58%
nail'd	201	61%
Naruto: Ultimate Ninja Storm	174	59%
Naruto Shippuden: Ultimate Ninja Storm Generations	217	53%
NASCAR 08	157	38%
Naughty Bear	195	64%
NBA 07	153	33%
NBA 2K7	151	76%
NBA 2K8	172	71%
NBA 2K10	186	79%
NBA 2K11	199	82%
NBA 2K12	211	88%
NBA 2K13	224	88%
NBA Jam	200	68%
NBA Live 08	158	59%
NBA Live 09	170	81%
NBA Street: Homecourt	151	68%
Need For Speed Carbon	151	76%
Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit	199	91%
Need For Speed: Most Wanted	225	95%
Need For Speed ProStreet	161	86%

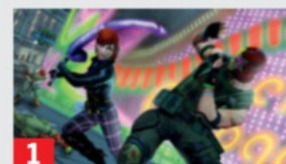


Need For Speed: Most Wanted is easily the best arcade racer of this generation. We absolutely love it.

Need For Speed Shift	184	81%
Need For Speed: The Run	213	63%
Need For Speed Undercover	173	75%
NeverDead	215	39%
Nier	192	54%
Ni No Kuni: Wrath Of The White Witch	227	85%
NHL 2K7	151	80%
NHL 2K9	172	67%
NHL 2K10	186	70%
NHL 09	170	88%
NHL 10	184	85%
NHL 11	198	89%
NHL 12	210	78%
NHL 13	223	74%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma	154	88%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2	184	82%
Ninja Gaiden 3	217	63%
No More Heroes: Heroes' Paradise	206	89%
One Piece: Pirate Warriors	224	69%
Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising	185	78%
Operation Flashpoint: Red River	205	75%
The Orange Box	161	93%
Overlord: Raising Hell	167	65%
Overlord II	181	68%
Pain	183	69%
PES 2008	159	70%
PES 2009	172	80%
PES 2010	185	72%
PES 2011	197	73%
PES 2012	210	74%
Phineas & Ferb: Across The 2nd Dimension	211	66%
PixelJunk Racers	160	74%
PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale	225	80%
PlayStation Move Heroes	204	54%
POTC: At World's End	154	48%
Port Royale 3: Pirates & Merchants	224	54%
Portal 2	205	95%
Prince Of Persia	174	83%
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	193	68%
Prince Of Persia Trilogy	200	88%
Prison Break: The Conspiracy	191	40%
Prototype	181	76%
Prototype 2	219	75%
Puma After Hours Athletes	214	58%
Pure	171	80%
Pure Football	194	69%
Quantum Of Solace	175	57%
Quantum Theory	197	29%
Race Driver: GRID	167	85%
Ratchet & Clank: Q-Force	227	52%
Racket Sports	198	37%
Rage	211	60%
Rainbow Six Vegas	155	88%
Rainbow Six Vegas 2	164	78%
Rango	203	54%
Ratchet & Clank: A Crack In Time	186	82%
Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One	211	68%
Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction	160	72%
Ratchet & Clank Trilogy HD	221	88%
Rayman Origins	212	80%
Red Dead Redemption	193	92%
Red Dead Redemption: Undead Nightmare	199	87%
Red Faction: Armageddon	207	62%
Red Faction: Guerrilla	180	80%
Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City	217	33%
Resident Evil 5	177	86%
Resident Evil 5: Gold Edition	190	86%
Resident Evil 6	223	88%
Resistance: Fall Of Man	151	83%
Resistance 2	173	90%
Resistance 3	210	88%
Resonance Of Fate	191	79%
Ridge Racer 7	151	75%
Ridge Racer Unbounded	217	67%
Rise Of The Argonauts	176	58%
Risen 2: Dark Waters	222	64%
Rock Band	169	94%
Rock Band 2	179	96%
Rock Band 3	199	84%

*denotes import review

TOP TEN FUNNY GAMES



1 Saints Row 3



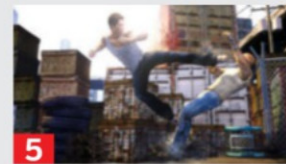
2 Secret Of Monkey Island: Special Edition



3 Borderlands 2



4 Tokyo Jungle



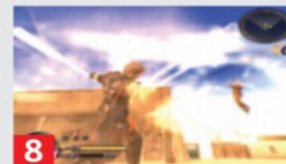
5 Sleeping Dogs



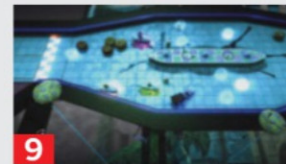
6 Canis Canem Edit



7 Asura's Wrath



8 God Hand



9 LittleBigPlanet 2



10 The Simpsons Game

PS3'S EXPERIMENTAL GAMES



HEAVY RAIN

Success or failure? Masterful attempt to push storytelling forwards or wannabe cinema nonsense? *Heavy Rain* is one of the generation's most polarising games, but either way, we're happy we got to play it on PlayStation 3. It's undoubtedly one of the platform's most important exclusives.



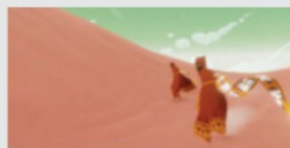
THE WALKING DEAD

Alright, so episodic storytelling isn't new by any means, but *The Walking Dead* took the idea and turned it into the ultimate choice-based narrative, with key decisions carrying over between instalments and building up to a heartbreaking climax in the final part. ALSO ZOMBIES.



LITTLEBIGPLANET 2

Inventive? Yes, because you invent things. *LittleBigPlanet 2* offers a terrific paradigm for players to make their mark with the creator tools, whether that means setting a level inside a toilet or creating your own ten-part *Star Wars*-themed epic. That's the magic of Media Molecule's series.



JOURNEY

Can you build an emotional bond with someone just by walking across a world with them? Yes, you can, and the impression it creates is quite unlike anything else we've experienced in a game. That's why *Journey* is incredible, and it's the kind of exclusive title we've come to expect from Sony over the past five years.



FLOWER

On the same tip, *Flower* actually used Sixaxis in a smart way, while everyone else forgot about the PS3's arbitrary motion control function. It was far better than melee attacking troops in the pants *Call Of Duty 3*.

game	issue	score
Rocksmith	223	78%
Rogue Warrior	188	09%
Rugby World Cup 2011	209	49%
Rune Factory Oceans	220	51%
R.U.S.E.	197	82%
The Saboteur	187	67%
Sacred 2: Fallen Angel	180	76%
Saints Row 2	172	79%
Saints Row: The Third	211	88%
SBK Generations	220	51%
Saint Seiya: Sanctuary Battle	216	52%
Saw	186	52%
Saw II: Flesh & Blood	198	36%
Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection	177	85%
SBK 08	172	55%
SBK 2011	206	70%
SBK Generations	220	54%
SBK X: Superbike World Championship	193	67%
Sega Rally	158	92%
Sengoku Basara: Samurai Heroes	198	76%
Shadows Of The Damned	207	79%
Shaun White Skateboarding	198	70%
Shaun White Snowboarding	173	72%
Shellshock 2: Blood Trails	177	32%
Shift 2: Unleashed	204	66%
The Shoot	199	76%
Silent Hill: Downpour	217	81%
Silent Hill HD Collection	217	76%
Silent Hill: Homecoming	174	64%
The Simpsons Game	160	82%
The Sims 3	199	87%
The Sims 3: Pets	212	70%
SingStar	159	80%
SingStar Guitar	199	70%
SingStar Pop Edition	179	81%
Singularity	195	80%
Skate	159	86%
Skate 2	175	82%
Skate 3	192	86%
Sleeping Dogs	222	80%
The Sly Collection	200	84%
Sniper Elite V2	218	52%
Sniper: Ghost Warrior	206	45%
SOCOM: Special Forces	205	63%
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	190	78%
Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed	227	88%
Sonic Generations	212	70%
Sonic The Hedgehog	151	52%
Sonic Unleashed	175	48%
Sorcery	219	76%
SoulCalibur IV	169	94%
SoulCalibur V	214	80%
Spec Ops: The Line	220	59%
Spider-Man 3	155	33%
Spider-Man: Edge Of Time	212	38%
Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions	197	69%
Spider-Man: Web Of Shadows	173	55%
Splatterhouse	200	58%
Splinter Cell Double Agent	153	79%
Split/Second: Velocity	192	90%
Sports Champions	196	83%
Sports Champions 2	225	65%
SSX	216	45%
Starhawk	219	81%
Star Ocean: The Last Hope International	190	63%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	171	65%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II	199	61%
Start The Party!	196	72%
Stormrise	178	51%
Stranglehold	159	65%
Street Fighter IV	176	95%
Street Fighter X Tekken	217	83%
Super Street Fighter IV: Arcade Edition	207	88%
Stuntman: Ignition	157	82%
SuperCar Challenge	183	66%
Superstars V8: Next Challenge	190	55%
Superstars V8 Racing	181	63%
Super Street Fighter IV	191	90%
Supremacy MMA	211	40%
Syndicate	216	78%
Tales Of Graces f	222	77%
Tekken 6	184	94%
Tekken Hybrid	213	79%
Tekken Tag Tournament 2	223	90%
Test Drive Ferrari Racing Legends	221	60%



Far from being the sideshow attraction the word 'spin-off' might suggest, *Tekken Tag Tournament 2* is actually pretty damn brilliant.

game	issue	score
Test Drive Unlimited 2	203	62%
The Amazing Spider-Man	221	61%
The Testament Of Sherlock Holmes	224	55%
Thor: God Of Thunder	206	38%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07	151	88%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	158	73%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09	171	86%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10	181	69%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11	194	60%
Tiger Woods PGA 12: The Masters	204	65%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 13	217	70%
Time Crisis 4	166	69%
Time Crisis: Razing Storm	199	58%
TimeShift	162	72%
TNA Impact!	171	71%
Tom Clancy's EndWar	173	80%
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X.	177	75%
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2	196	69%
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Trilogy HD	210	78%
Tomb Raider Trilogy	204	86%
Tomb Raider: Underworld	173	83%
Tony Hawk's Project 8	151	85%
Tony Hawk's Proving Ground	160	72%
Tony Hawk: Ride	188	52%
Top Gun: Hard Lock	218	45%
Top Spin 3	168	71%
Top Spin 4	203	60%
Tornado Outbreak	186	56%
Toy Story 3	195	82%
Transformers: Dark Of The Moon	208	64%
Transformers: Fall Of Cybertron	223	73%
Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen	182	41%
Transformers: The Game	156	34%
Transformers: War For Cybertron	194	80%
Trinity: Souls Of Zill O'll	202	56%
Trinity Universe	194	61%
Tron Evolution	200	17%
Turning Point: Fall Of Liberty	165	40%
Turok	163	46%
TV Superstars	199	53%
Twisted Metal	216	68%
Two Worlds II	203	64%
UEFA Euro 2008	165	62%
UFC Undisputed 2009	180	90%
UFC Undisputed 2010	193	88%
UFC Undisputed 3	215	82%
Ultimate Marvel vs Capcom 3	212	78%
Uncharted: Drake's Fortune	161	87%
Uncharted 2: Among Thieves	185	96%
Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception	212	90%
Unreal Tournament III	162	88%
Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom	151	54%
Valkyria Chronicles	173	82%
Vancouver 2010	189	76%
Vanquish	197	93%
Viking: Battle For Asgard	165	74%
Virtua Fighter 5	151	83%
Virtua Tennis 2009	180	80%
Virtua Tennis 3	150	91%
Virtua Tennis 4	205	79%
Wanted: Weapons Of Fate	179	63%
Warhammer 40,000: Space Marine	210	51%
Warhawk	157	84%
Warriors: Legends Of Troy	202	14%
Warriors Orochi 3	217	59%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
Way Of The Samurai 3	190	16%
Wet	184	41%
Wheelman	178	72%
Where The Wild Things Are	188	56%
White Knight Chronicles	190	55%
White Knight Chronicles II	207	49%
Wolfenstein	183	72%
Wonderbook: Book Of Spells	226	80%
World Snooker Championship 2007	151	56%
Worms Collection	224	85%
WRC: FIA World Rally Championship	197	76%
WRC 2: FIA World Rally Championship	211	63%
WRC 3 FIA World Rally Championship	225	75%
WSC REAL 09: World Snooker Championship	177	67%
WSC Real 11	204	69%
WWE All Stars	204	82%
WWE Legends Of WrestleMania	178	80%
WWE SmackDown vs Raw 2008	159	88%
WWE SmackDown vs Raw 2009	173	74%
WWE SmackDown vs Raw 2010	185	77%
WWE SmackDown vs Raw 2011	199	63%
WWE 12	212	50%
WWE 13	225	55%

game	issue	score
X-Blades	178	54%
XCOM: Enemy Unknown	224	94%
X-Men Destiny	211	35%
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	179	71%
Yakuza: Dead Souls	216	60%
Yakuza 3	191	80%
Yakuza 4	203	79%
Yostar 2: In The Movies	204	60%
Zone Of The Enders HD Collection	226	81%

PS VITA LISTING



A-Men	217	70%
Army Corps Of Hell	217	64%
Assassin's Creed III: Liberation	225	76%
Everybody's Golf	215	86%
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift Extend	216	85%
Call Of Duty: Black Ops Declassified	227	18%
Escape Plan	216	81%
FIFA Football	216	80%
Gravity Rush	219	86%
Hustle Kings	216	81%
LittleBigPlanet	223	93%
Little Deviants	215	69%
Lumines Electric Symphony	216	85%
MGS HD Collection	221	70%
ModNation Racers: Road Trip	215	59%
Mortal Kombat	219	83%
MotorStorm RC	217	81%
New Little King's Story	224	70%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma Plus	217	72%
PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale	225	80%
Puddle	222	82%
Rayman Origins	216	84%
Reality Fighters	215	52%
Resistance: Burning Skies	219	54%
Ridge Racer	216	48%
Silent Hill: Book Of Memories	225	32%
Sound Shapes	223	88%
Super Monkey Ball: Banana Splitz	224	78%
Super Stardust Delta	216	84%
Touch My Katamari	216	83%
Ultimate Marvel vs Capcom 3	216	80%
Uncharted: Golden Abyss	215	83%
Unit 13	216	67%
Virtua Tennis 4: World Tour Edition	215	81%
Virtue's Last Reward	227	84%
WipEout 2048	215	87%

PS STORE LISTING



1942: Joint Strike	170	74%
3-On-3 NHL Arcade	177	62%
After Burner Climax	193	91%
Age Of Booty	172	81%
Alien Breed: Impact	196	80%
Alien Breed 2: Assault	201	82%
Alien Breed 3: Descent	204	61%
All Zombies Must Die!	214	64%
Amy	215	19%
Anarchy: Rush Hour	194	73%
Aqua Panic	193	68%
Arc The Lad	215	79%
Armageddon Riders	207	65%
Atelier Meruru: The Apprentice Of Arland	221	35%
Back To The Future: It's About Time	204	71%
The Baoning	210	72%
Battlefield 1943	182	89%
Beat Hazard Ultra	213	79%
Beat Sketcher	201	85%
Beyond Good & Evil HD	207	86%
Bishi Bashi Special!	175	61%
Bionic Commando Rearmed	169	88%
Bionic Commando Rearmed 2	203	61%
Blacklight: Tango Down	200	64%
Blade Kitten	197	72%
Blast Factor	152	72%
Blokus	202	54%

game	issue	score
BloodRayne: Betrayal	211	62%
Blue Toad Murder Files: The Mysteries Of Little Riddle Episode I	188	65%
Blue Toad Murder Files: The Mysteries Of Little Riddle Episode II	188	61%
Blue Toad Murder Files Episodes 4/5/6	193	70%
Bombberman Ultra	185	82%
Braid	188	93%
Burn Zombie Burn	178	85%
Burnout Crash	211	79%
Call Of Duty Classic	188	90%
Calling All Cars	155	81%
Castle Crashers	200	88%
Castlevania: Harmony Of Despair	212	67%
Catan	195	85%
Chime Super Deluxe	203	80%
Comet Crash	186	84%
Comix Zone	210	62%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert	16	79%
Command & Conquer Red Alert: Retaliation	176	55%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	168	70%
Commander's Challenge	185	68%
Command & Conquer	175	44%
Cool Boarders	173	57%
Cool Boarders 2	175	31%
Costume Quest	199	70%
Counter-Strike: Global Offensive	223	89%
Crash Bandicoot	172	77%
Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped	174	82%
Crash Commando	174	80%
Crash Team Racing	170	79%
Crazy Machines Elements	210	71%
Crazy Taxi	200	80%
Crescent Pale Mist	200	70%
Critter Crunch	188	91%
Crystal Defenders	184	48%
Cubixx HD	207	76%
Dark Mist	164	53%
Dead Nation	201	86%
Dead Space: Extraction	203	88%
Dead Space: Ignition	199	47%
DeathSpank	195	83%
Derrick The Deathfin	227	79%
Destruction Derby	01	80%
.detuned	186	50%
Deus Ex	219	83%
Digger HD	186	52%
Diner Dash	190	66%
Double Dragon Neon	224	37%
Driver	171	90%
Droplitz	184	91%
Earthworm Jim HD	196	89%
Eat Them!	202	60%
echochrome	169	85%
echochrome II	202	83%
Elefunk	170	45%
Euforia	212	85%
Explodemon	203	70%
Fat Princess	183	65%
Fatal Inertia EX	168	65%
FIFA 09 Ultimate Team	178	61%
Final Fight: Double Impact	193	90%
Final Fantasy VII	181	96%
Final Fantasy VIII	190	90%
Final Fantasy IX	195	90%
Flight Control HD	198	85%
Flock!	179	70%
flOw	151	90%
Flower	176	85%
Frogger: Hyper Arcade Edition	221	55%
Frogger Returns	190	35%
From Dust	211	82%
Funky Lab Rat	201	70%
G-Police	27	84%
Galaxy Fight	215	27%
Gatling Gears	207	62%
Geon	175	71%
Go! Puzzle	152	58%
God Hand	216	83%
Gotham City Impostors	216	78%
Grand Theft Auto III	224	90%
 GTA III shuttles onto the slowly growing list of PSN classics, and still illustrates why Rockstar's original 3D take on the series was so influential.		
Gran Turismo HD	150	75%
Gravity Crash	187	85%
Greed Corp	191	75%
Greg Hastings Paintball 2	219	22%
GTI Club+	174	72%

game	issue	score
Guardians Of Middle-Earth	227	71%
Gundemonium Collection	197	80%
Gunstar Heroes	181	85%
Hamsterball	194	72%
Hardcore 4x4	15	81%
Hasbro Family Game Night	187	60%
Heavy Weapon	187	75%
High Velocity Bowling	163	50%
Hi-Octane	178	64%
The House Of The Dead 4	218	82%
Hustle Kings	190	87%
Hyperballoid HD	188	70%
I Am Alive	217	64%
inFamous Collection	224	85%
inFamous: Festival Of Blood	212	76%
Inferno Pool	181	81%
International Track & Field	171	80%
Interpol: The Trail Of Doctor Chaos	185	48%
Invincible Tiger: The Legend Of Han Tao	185	70%
Jet Rider 2	176	71%
Joe Danger	194	96%
Journey	216	87%
Judge Dredd	18	19%
Jumping Flash	172	55%
Jurassic Park: The Game	214	32%
Kick-Ass The Game	194	60%
Killzone HD	225	65%
Kula World	172	71%
Kung-Fu Live	201	42%
Landit Bandit	195	66%
Lara Croft And The Guardian Of Light	198	90%
The Last Guy	171	91%
Lead & Gold: Gangs Of The Wild West	193	65%
Lemmings	151	79%
Limbo	209	90%
Linger In Shadows	173	69%
LocoRoco Cocoreccho!	159	80%
Lumines Supernova	178	90%
Madden NFL Arcade	188	58%
Mad Riders	220	70%
Magic Carpet	179	65%
Magic: The Gathering: Duels Of The Planeswalkers	202	84%
Magic: The Gathering: Duels Of The Planeswalkers 2012	208	70%
Marvel vs Capcom 2	182	90%
Matt Hazard: Blood Bath And Beyond	189	69%
Medal Of Honor: Frontline	210	52%
MediEvil	173	45%
Mega Man 9	172	75%
Mega Man 10	192	82%
Metal Gear Solid	187	93%
Metal Gear Solid Online	175	45%
Microbot	202	51%
Monkey Island 2: Special Edition	195	94%
Motorhead	173	60%
Namco Museum Essentials	193	60%
Naruto Shippuden: Kizuna Drive	205	42%
NBA Jam: On Fire Edition	212	64%
Nights Into Dreams...	224	75%
Noby Noby Boy	177	85%
Nucleus	155	82%
Numblast	183	60%
N20	37	70%
Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath HD	214	86%
Okami HD	225	90%
 Okami is lovely, just as we remember it, and has been given a treatment that takes it far beyond the muffled visual quality of the PS2 original.		
Outland	207	72%
OutRun Online Arcade	180	80%
Pac-Man Championship Edition DX	201	91%
Payday: The Heist	213	88%
Pain	183	69%
Peggle	189	94%
Pinballistik	215	75%
PixelJunk 4am	220	40%
PixelJunk Eden	169	67%
PixelJunk Monsters	163	94%
PixelJunk Shooter	187	93%
PixelJunk Shooter 2	204	90%
PixelJunk SideScroller	213	77%
Piyotama	162	62%
Planet Minigolf	196	58%
Polar Panic	190	65%
Populous: The Beginning	46	70%
Prince Of Persia Classic	173	67%
Puddle	216	76%
The Punisher: No Mercy	182	49%

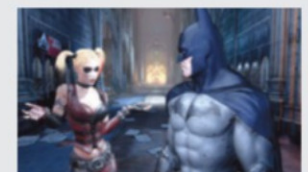
game	issue	score
Puzzle Chronicles	194	70%
Puzzle Dimension	208	81%
Puzzle Quest Galactrix	181	68%
Q*bert	58	53%
Quantum Conundrum	221	90%
Rag Doll Kung Fu: Fists Of Plastic	179	83%
Rampage: World Tour	29	77%
Rainbow Moon	221	68%
Ratchet & Clank: Quest For Booty	170	69%
Rayman	01	76%
Rayman 3 HD	217	77%
Renegade Ops	211	78%
Resident Evil 4 HD	210	93%
Resident Evil Code Veronica X	211	72%
Resident Evil Chronicles HD Collection	221	82%
Revenge Of The Wounded Dragons	191	60%
Riff: Everyday Shooter	162	86%
Risk: Factions	202	80%
Rock Band Blitz	223	80%
Rocketbirds: Hardboiled Chicken	212	82%
Rocket Knight	194	74%
Rocketmen: Axis Of Evil	165	63%
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playhouse Episode 1	194	90%
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playhouse Episode 2	194	92%
Sega Rally Online Arcade	208	74%
Savage Moon	175	87%
Scott Pilgrim vs The World	197	77%
The Secret Of Monkey Island SE	195	92%
Section 8	193	78%
Section 8: Prejudice	209	80%
Shank	197	86%
Shatter	183	91%
Sheep	171	78%
Shoot Many Robots	217	81%
The Simpsons: Arcade Game	216	54%
Siren Blood Curse	170	62%
Skullgirls	218	88%
Smash Cars	184	50%
SOCOM Confrontation	178	55%
Soldner-X 2: Final Prototype	195	70%
Sonic Adventure	198	63%
Sonic Adventure 2	225	69%
Sonic CD	214	82%
Sonic The Hedgehog 4: Episode I	199	82%
Sonic The Hedgehog 4: Episode II	220	40%
Spin Jam	174	32%
Snakeball	176	92%
Stacking	203	88%
Star Trek: D-A-C	189	57%
Street Fighter Alpha: Warrior's Dream	159	57%
Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike Online Edition	209	92%
Street Skater 2	178	40%
Super Puzzle Fighter II HD Turbo Remix	168	78%
Super Rub-A-Dub	151	83%
Supersonic Acrobatic Rocket-Powered Battle-Cars	177	65%
Super Stardust HD	155	74%
Super Street Fighter II Turbo HD Remix	176	72%
Switchball	191	75%
Swords And Soldiers	199	88%
Syphon Filter	48	93%
Syphon Filter 3	170	80%
Tales Of Monkey Island	196	91%
Tank Battles	186	68%
Tekken HD	150	80%
Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection Online	161	87%
Tetris	202	84%
Theme Hospital	32	80%
Theme Park	174	80%
TMNT: Turtles In Time Re-shelled	186	57%
Tokyo Jungle	223	81%
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six	54	34%
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater HD	223	73%
Top Darts	202	71%
Top Gun	198	53%
Topota: Spinning Through The Worlds	183	61%
ToyHome	162	31%
Trash Panic	181	79%
Trials Of Topaq	159	50%
Trine	184	85%
Tumble	198	70%
Uncharted: Fight For Fortune	227	83%
Under Siege	207	71%
The Unfinished Swan	225	78%
Uno	189	85%
Vagrant Story	189	82%
Vandal Hearts: Flames Of Judgment	192	87%
Virtua Fighter 5: Final Showdown	220	90%
The Walking Dead: Episode 1	219	89%
The Walking Dead Episode 2	221	90%

PS3'S BEST GAMES BATMAN: ARKHAM CITY 94%, PLAY 160

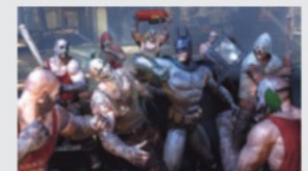
We've three-starred every challenge room in *Arkham City*, just to show how much we love it. This is the definitive *Batman* experience. Mastering his abilities feels as close to being the Dark Knight himself as we'll ever get.



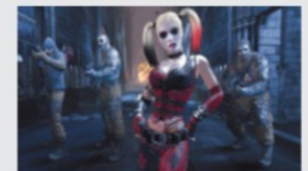
What impresses about *Arkham City* is how damned detailed the open world is – Gotham isn't huge, but what's there is so complete-feeling, capturing everything we love about that fictional locale in movies and TV shows.



Only two parts let it down: the last boss fight against Clayface and the encounter with Ra's Al Ghul later on. Coming off *Arkham Asylum*, nothing would quite be able to top the Scarecrow fight, although the Mister Freeze clash comes rather close.



Makes you wonder what they'll put in the next one. The rumour is Superman and the Justice League, set against the backdrop of a Silver Age environment. For now, we appreciate how close to the animated series and Frank Miller graphic novels this version of *Batman* is.



The combat is near-perfect, aside from the very occasional animation glitch or failure to recognise enemies around you. Understanding the rhythm of how all *Batman*'s tools work together is a terrific feeling.

DOWNLOAD THESE 3D PLATFORMER EDITION



CRASH BANDICOOT 3: WARPED

93%, Play 54

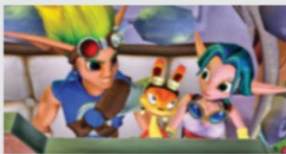
The best of the *Crash Bandicoot* series by far, this was Naughty Dog at its best on PSone, with top tier level design that really made the most of the series' established dynamics. Download it now for a very reasonable £3.99 on PSN.



SPYRO THE DRAGON

91%, Play 43

It's finally here! We waited years – far too long, really – but Insomniac's original PlayStation hero made it onto PSN at the end of last year. Still completely solid, *Spyro* shows that Insomniac produces some of the greatest 3D platformers around on those occasions when it fires on all cylinders.



JAK & DAXTER

91%, Play 86

Yup, we're still playing this one. Blame those Trophies, and the fact that Naughty Dog managed to make Precursor Orbs more compulsive to collect than anything in the history of platformers. Plus, you don't have to collect them all to beat the game! *Jak & Daxter* certainly holds up well.



RATCHET & CLANK

93%, Play 96

Before the tower defence and co-op gimmicks, *Ratchet* was a straightforward mixture of third-person shooter and platformer, with this first instalment still capturing that essence better than about half of the succeeding titles (though *A Crack In Time* is arguably the strongest one).



JOE DANGER

96%, Play 194

It's sort of a platformer, among many other things – and there's no shortage of things to collect. *Joe Danger* is a must-own on PSN, so go and download it now if you haven't already.

game	issue	score
The Walking Dead: Episode 3	223	86%
Wakeboarding HD	192	65%
Warhawk	225	48%
Warhawk: Operation Fallen Star	171	80%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?	214	79%
WipEout	01	89%
WipEout HD	172	84%
Wizorb	222	78%
Wolfenstein	181	70%
Wonder Boy In Monster Land	220	50%
Worms	179	91%
Worms 2: Armageddon	198	87%
Worms Battle Islands	201	80%
Worms Crazy Golf	213	82%
Worms: Ultimate Mayhem	217	80%
X-Men Arcade	203	60%
Yars' Revenge	206	57%
Zack Zero	215	73%
Zen Pinball 2	224	90%
The finest pinball game we've seen in a long time, but in a newer, shinier, updatedier fashion. Yay pinball!		
Zombie Apocalypse: Never Die Alone	213	69%
Zuma	182	78%

PSP LISTING



The 3rd Birthday	203	80%
300: March To Glory	152	59%
Ace Combat X	147	72%
Ace Combat: Joint Assault	194	79%
After Burner: Black Falcon	152	82%
Ape Academy 2	145	52%
Ape Escape P	140	37%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	190	45%
Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines	187	77%
Astonishia Story	142	68%
Beaterator	186	72%
Blade Dancer: Lineage Of Light	145	45%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger Portable	194	84%
Blood Bowl	184	53%
Bombberman	150	83%
Boulder Dash: Rocks!	165	69%
Breath Of Fire III	138	82%
Brothers In Arms: D-Day	149	69%
Burnout Dominator	153	65%
Burnout Legends	134	94%
Buzz! Brain Bender	175	68%
Capcom Classics Collection Reloaded	147	80%
Capcom Classics Collection Remixed	141	72%
Cars	143	60%
Castlevania: The Dracula X Chronicles	163	78%
Championship Manager	137	65%
Championship Manager 2006	140	32%
Cid The Dummy	180	32%
Coded Arms	134	53%
Call Of Duty: Roads To Victory	153	69%
Colin McRae Rally 2005 Plus	134	84%
The Con	153	59%
Crisis Core: Final Fantasy VII	167	87%
Crush	154	80%
The Cube	153	64%
Dante's Inferno	191	76%
Dead Or Alive: Paradise	192	56%
Disgaea: Afternoon Of Darkness	161	92%
Dissidia: Final Fantasy	184	60%
Dissidia 012 Final Fantasy	203	79%
Disgaea 2: Dark Hero Days	190	87%
Dragon Ball Z: Shin Budokai 2	154	50%
Driver 76	154	68%
Dungeons & Dragons: Tactics	159	55%
Dungeon Siege: Throne Of Agony	148	85%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	179	69%
EA Replay	147	74%
echochrome	169	85%
echoshift	191	73%
Everybody's Golf 2	167	86%
Everybody's Tennis	195	88%
Every Extend Extra	145	84%
Exit	138	65%
The Eye Of Judgment: Legends	191	57%
EyePet	199	77%
F1 2009	187	66%
Fate/Extra	219	60%
Field Commander	145	83%
FIFA 06	136	43%
FIFA 07	147	81%
FIFA 11	198	69%

*denotes import review

game	issue	score
FIFA World Cup 2010	193	65%
Fired Up	134	60%
Final Fantasy	164	63%
Final Fantasy III	224	44%
Final Fantasy IV: The Complete Collection	204	80%
Final Fantasy Tactics	159	86%
FlatOut: Head On	164	79%
Football Manager 2007	147	62%
Football Manager Handheld 2008	161	49%
Football Manager Handheld 2010	187	60%
Formula One 06	143	78%
Frantix	136	36%
Gangs Of London	144	65%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	42%
Ghost Recon Predator	200	60%
Ghostbusters: The Video Game	188	55%
Ghostbusters: Sanctum Of Slime	204	51%
Gitaroo Man Lives!	144	79%
Gladiator Begins	206	52%
Go! Sudoku	137	45%
The Godfather: Mob Wars	136	66%
Gods Eater Burst	202	88%
God Of War: Chains Of Olympus	165	84%
God Of War: Ghost Of Sparta	199	79%
Gradius Collection	144	80%
Gran Turismo	184	85%
Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars	185	95%
GTA: Liberty City Stories	135	95%
GTA: Vice City Stories	147	96%
Half-Minute Hero	191	87%
Hard Corps: Uprising	204	78%
Harry Potter And The Goblet Of Fire	136	69%
Hellboy: Science Of Evil	170	60%
Holy Invasion Of Privacy, Badman! What Did I Do To Deserve This?	186	73%
Hot Pixel	155	73%
Indiana Jones And The Staff Of Kings	181	60%
Infected	141	68%
Innocent Life: A Futuristic Harvest Moon	154	70%
International Athletics	170	40%
Invizimals	187	71%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
Juiced: Eliminator	141	70%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	160	80%
Kao Challengers	137	60%
Killzone: Liberation	146	83%
Kingdom Hearts: Birth By Sleep	196	88%
The Legend Of Heroes: Trails In The Sky	214	75%
Lemmings	138	63%
LittleBigPlanet	186	90%
LocoRoco	143	94%
LocoRoco 2	173	82%
LocoRoco Midnight Carnival	186	81%
Lord Of Arcana	202	65%
The Lord Of The Rings: Tactics	136	66%
Lumines II	137	74%
Madden NFL 06	137	74%
Marvel Trading Cards	155	38%
Me And My Katamari	138	86%
Medal Of Honor Heroes	147	72%
MediEvil: Resurrection	134	53%
Mercury Meltdown	145	66%
Metal Slug Anthology	150	91%
Metal Gear Acid 2	138	92%
Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker	193	92%
Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops	150	91%
Miami Vice	144	82%
Micro Machines V4	142	71%
Might & Magic: Clash Of Heroes	205	84%
ModNation Racers	193	70%
Monster Hunter Freedom	140	81%
Monster Hunter Freedom 2	157	59%
Monster Hunter Freedom Unite	181	77%
Moon Diver	205	46%
MotoGP	146	75%
Motorstorm: Arctic Edge	184	72%
Mytran Wars	179	85%
Namco Museum Battle Collection	136	68%
Naruto Shippuden Legends	185	46%
Naruto Ultimate Ninja Heroes 2	169	46%
NBA Ballers: Rebound	139	61%
Need For Speed Undercover	175	57%
No Heroes Allowed	199	69%
OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast	139	93%
PaRappa The Rapper	155	88%
Patapon	163	86%
Patapon 2	177	87%
Patapon 3	205	81%
Patchwork Heroes	192	85%
Persona 2: Innocent Sin	214	65%
Pirates Of The Caribbean	143	52%

game	issue	score
PixelJunk Monster Deluxe	185	86%
Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	163	77%
Pocket Racers	144	49%
PoPoLoCroIS	142	71%
Power Stone Collection	145	88%
PQ – Practical Intelligence Quotient	141	52%
Prince Of Persia Revelations	138	69%
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	194	52%
Prinny: Can I Really Be The Hero?	181	80%
PSN Collection: Power Pack	173	70%
PSN Collection: Puzzle Pack	173	54%
Pursuit Force	134	83%
Pursuit Force: Extreme Justice	159	76%
Puzzle Chronicles	190	61%
Puzzle Quest	153	66%
R-Type Tactics	170	74%
Rainbow Six Vegas	156	78%
Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters	154	78%
Red Faction: Battlegrounds	205	78%
Rengoku 2	144	72%
Resistance: Retribution	177	76%
Ridge Racer 2	145	78%
Ridge Racer	132	91%
Rock Band Unplugged	181	92%
Rocky Balboa	150	68%
Secret Agent Clank	169	79%
Sega Mega Drive Collection	177	79%
Sega Rally	158	90%
Shin Megami Tensei: Persona 3 Portable	206	78%
Shinobido: Tales Of The Ninja	150	60%
Silent Hill Origins	160	87%
Silent Hill: Shattered Memories	190	52%
The Sims 2	137	71%
Slam Bolt Scrappers	204	73%
Smash Court Tennis	154	58%
SOCOM Fire Team 2	154	70%
SOCOM: Fireteam Bravo 3	190	71%
SOCOM: Tactical Strike	160	85%
SOCOM: US Navy SEALs Fireteam Bravo	140	69%
Sonic Rivals	147	70%
Sonic Rivals 2	162	35%
SoulCalibur: Broken Destiny	183	92%
Spider-Man 3	162	32%
Spinout	149	81%
Splinter Cell: Essentials	139	71%
Split/Second: Velocity	200	71%
SSX On Tour	138	76%
Star Ocean: Second Evolution	178	78%
Star Trek: Tactical Assault	148	59%
Star Wars Battlefront II	137	74%
Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron	187	65%
Star Wars: Lethal Alliance	148	69%
Star Wars: Renegade Squadron	160	78%
Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max	138	70%
Street Riders	140	29%
Super Monkey Ball Adventure	142	54%
Swarm	204	78%
Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror	140	90%
Tekken 6	187	90%
Tekken: Dark Resurrection	143	92%
Tactics Ogre: Let Us Cling Together	202	81%
Tenchu: Shadow Assassins	179	71%
Tenchu: Time Of The Assassins	146	51%
TNA Impact! Cross The Line	189	58%
TOCA 3	152	70%
Tokobot	140	79%
Tomb Raider: Anniversary	156	81%
Tomb Raider: Legend	140	72%
Twisted Metal Head-On	134	54%
UFC Undisputed 2010	197	80%
Ultimate Ghosts 'N Goblins	145	88%
Undead Knights	189	46%
Untold Legends: The Warrior's Code	140	59%
Valhalla Knights	158	49%
Valkyria Chronicles 2	196	87%
Valkyrie Profile: Lenneth	153	78%
Viewtiful Joe: Red Hot Rumble	140	82%
Virtua Tennis 3	152	88%
Warhammer 40,000: Squad Command	161	70%
What Did I Do To Deserve This My Lord!? 2	192	78%
WipEout Pulse	159	86%
WipEout Pure	138	91%
World Of Pool	156	43%
World Tour Poker	141	67%
World Tour Soccer 2	142	40%
Worms: Open Warfare 2	157	80%
WWE SmackDown! vs Raw 2006	137	84%
WWE SmackDown! vs Raw 2007	147	80%
World Rally Championship	134	67%



SAM SMITH
WHAT (HAVE THEY BEEN PLAYING?)
FINAL FANTASY TACTICS: THE WAR OF THE LIONS
WHY (WAS IT CHOSEN?)
 Because it never gets old

SAYING YOU LOVE *Final Fantasy Tactics* is a bit cliché these days. Join the club, pal! But the club exists for good reason. *FFT* is bloody ace, and the PSP remake *War Of The Lions* is even more so. Any game where you move little pixelated dudes around an isometric field of squares gets me excited in ways I'm not really proud to admit. The PSP is a treasure-trove of tactical RPGs, with stuff like *Disgaea*, *Tactics Ogre* and *Growlanser*, but for many *FFT* is the pinnacle of the genre. One of the great things about *FFT* is how unbalanced it is. Difficulty is all over the place – less of a learning curve and more of a learning mountain range. If you have the know-how, you can create an utterly broken squad of peeps that lay waste to all comers. If you make the wrong decisions, you can find yourself in a totally un-winnable situation, facing no option but to start the whole game again. It's proper freedom to do as you will, and it's great. My *War Of The Lions* UMD is pretty much welded to the inside of my PSP, and I wouldn't have it any other way.

PLAYING THE PLAYLIST

It's a new year – we're going to play more games than last year for the ruddy sake of it...

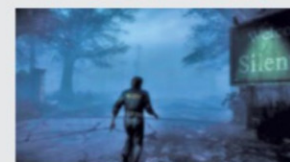
SAM ROBERTS
WHAT (HAVE THEY BEEN PLAYING?)
LEGO BATMAN 2: DC SUPER HEROES
WHY (WAS IT CHOSEN?)
 It's bloody Superman

ON A BIT of a superhero tip lately because of that ruddy amazing *Man Of Steel* trailer (I used to be on *SciFiNow* magazine, see, and that side of things still rests in my brain), and I remembered that the best Superman-based experience in any videogame actually comes in the form of a Batman title. Taking off in Gotham City as Superman allows the classic John Williams music to kick in, a moment that has to be experienced by any comic book or film fans out there – it's quite extraordinary, and I'm surprised something that feels so fresh came from the traditionally standardised *Lego* titles.

Anyway, when the rest of the Justice League piles in, it just gets better. Nobody liked the 2011 *Green Lantern* film except me, and I feel that my dorky appreciation of the character really has a home here. *Lego Batman 2* ties with *Lego LOTR* as the most ambitious of *Traveler's Tales* titles to date. I just hope they revisit DC's stock of vigilantes in the future.

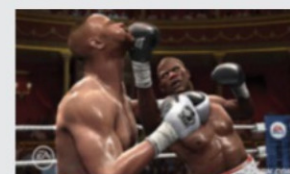


PLAY'S BEST GAMES IF YOU LIKE...



Interesting horror
PLAY: SILENT HILL: DOWNPOUR

The game may be rough, but some of the psychological horror elements in *Downpour* were genuinely interesting in terms of visual storytelling, even if the mechanics lack polish overall.



Punching
PLAY: FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 4
 Possibly the best in the series of EA boxing titles, as it lacks the ridiculously tough story mode seen in the later *Champion*, the career mode in *Round 4* is really nicely balanced in recreating that *Rocky*-style rise to greatness.



Feeling hungry
PLAY: SLEEPING DOGS
 It's the constant food stands in *Sleeping Dogs* that gets out bellies rumbling – United Front put an almost shocking amount of work into rendering tasty-looking grub in the game. We're hungry thinking about it.



Punching Sharks
PLAY: FAR CRY 3
 GADURRRJ! That's the sound of a shark getting punched in *Far Cry 3*, a game so flush with wildlife that you will inevitably end up doing a lot of things that your local vet wouldn't approve of.



Great Prequels
PLAY: CRISIS CORE: FINAL FANTASY VII
 The best of the *Final Fantasy* spin-offs – alright, aside from *Tactics*, we admit – this prequel told the story of Cloud's pal/mentor Zack, and defined his place in the game's universe. Shame it's not on PSN.



BORDERLANDS 2



WHAT WE SAID

PLAY 223
"It turns out that a studio doing exactly what we expected it to – make more, better, bigger, faster and better-looking stuff – can be a good thing. *Borderlands 2* is an excellent lesson in sequel-making and is easily one of 2012's best games."

90%
91
out of 100
metacritic

WHAT OTHERS SAID

WHAT DID YOU THINK OF BORDERLANDS 2? WERE YOU UP FOR MORE HILARITY AND LOOTING, OR WAS THE FIRST GAME JUST ENOUGH FOR YOU?

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EPIC! Stupidly crazy NPCs + Bajillions of shooty bang bangs = Best game of 2012!
ADAM DAVIS

I thought it was excellent, and I loved the way they made up for the rubbish storyline of the first one by tying bits up that blatantly were never planned, and the map variety is great (even if there is too much snow in the first couple of hours). **GUY WHITLOCK**

Just an awesome game. How could you not like a game with a quest called "Shoot this guy in the face". Beats the arse off *Skyrim*!
NIAL BALMER

Not brilliant, but better than some of the other games over the past few months. I still think it's for ten year olds. **THOMAS DAVIS**

It's a sexy game, and it knows it.
LUKE BARBER

Other developers should take notes: that's how a sequel should be made.
BRADLEY ALEXANDER FISHER

It's fun and looks cool, but there's a bunch of scary numbers and it tries too hard to be funny. **TORAN NICOLL**

twitter
twitter.com/PlayMag_UK

I wanted to like it as I loved the original. It just didn't do it for me though, I struggled to stay interested in it. **@HANKBIZZLE**

The funniest game I've ever played by far.
@THEHILLMONSTER

Our enjoyment was greatly enhanced by the Top Trumps cards. It meant we could drool over loot even when offline. **@TOPTRUMPS**

It's the best co-op game you could ask for and the DLC support is incredible too.
@ROCKETMINX

I bought the *Loot Chest Edition*, the limited edition strategy guide, the season pass and even the top trumps. I LOVE IT!!
@DAVIDP1985

Borderlands 2? Just freaking awesome. They really listen to the fans and made the game a real goty. **@NICKROOSASD**

My opinion one of the best in 2012. Just challenging enough without it being boring.
@EGROELOWE



Post-Mortem

Borderlands 2 made significant strides over the original in terms of quests, environmental design and certainly storytelling – after the original's surprise success, this has become a true smash hit and one of 2K's most important franchises, and given the community's strong response to DLC, Gearbox is likely to support the game for a good long while. It's damned funny, too, establishing a niche in silly and slightly naughty humour that sets it apart from every straight-faced game out there. The advantage of *Borderlands 2*'s DLC paradigm is that it can go anywhere and do anything, regardless of the theme, as Pandora has been established as pretty much the most multi-faceted fictional world ever. Clearly it's a title that's struck a chord with you lot, and when we get back around to doing **Play** community nights, it's definitely a title we'll have to check out. As a co-op experience, *Borderlands 2* keeps on giving, and it's that quality that's earned such a wide range of praise.

PLAY

The Voice Of PlayStation
Gaming For Over A Decade

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**TOMB RAIDER
REVIEWED**

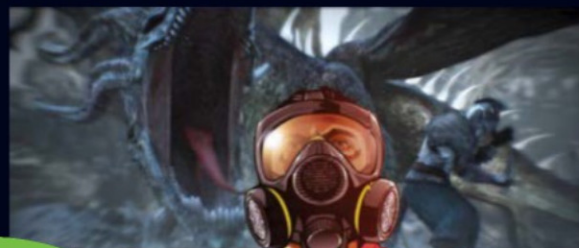
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The artwork features a central character, Kenshiro, with a determined expression and spiky black hair, surrounded by blue energy. Above him is a large, menacing red demon head with horns. Other characters, including a woman with purple hair and a man with long blonde hair, are visible in the background. The title 'FIST OF THE NORTH STAR' is in a metallic font, and 'KEN'S RAGE 2' is in a large, stylized red font with black outlines and spikes.

FIST OF THE NORTH STAR KEN'S RAGE 2

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